

THE LOOM OF YEARS
THE FLOWER OF OLD JAPAN
THE FOREST OF WILD THYME
FORTY SINGING SEAMEN

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COLLECTED POEMS



COLLECTED POEMS

BY

ALFRED NOYES

VOL. I.

THE LOOM OF YEARS

THE FLOWER OF OLD JAPAN

THE FOREST OF WILD THYME

FORTY SINGING SEAMEN

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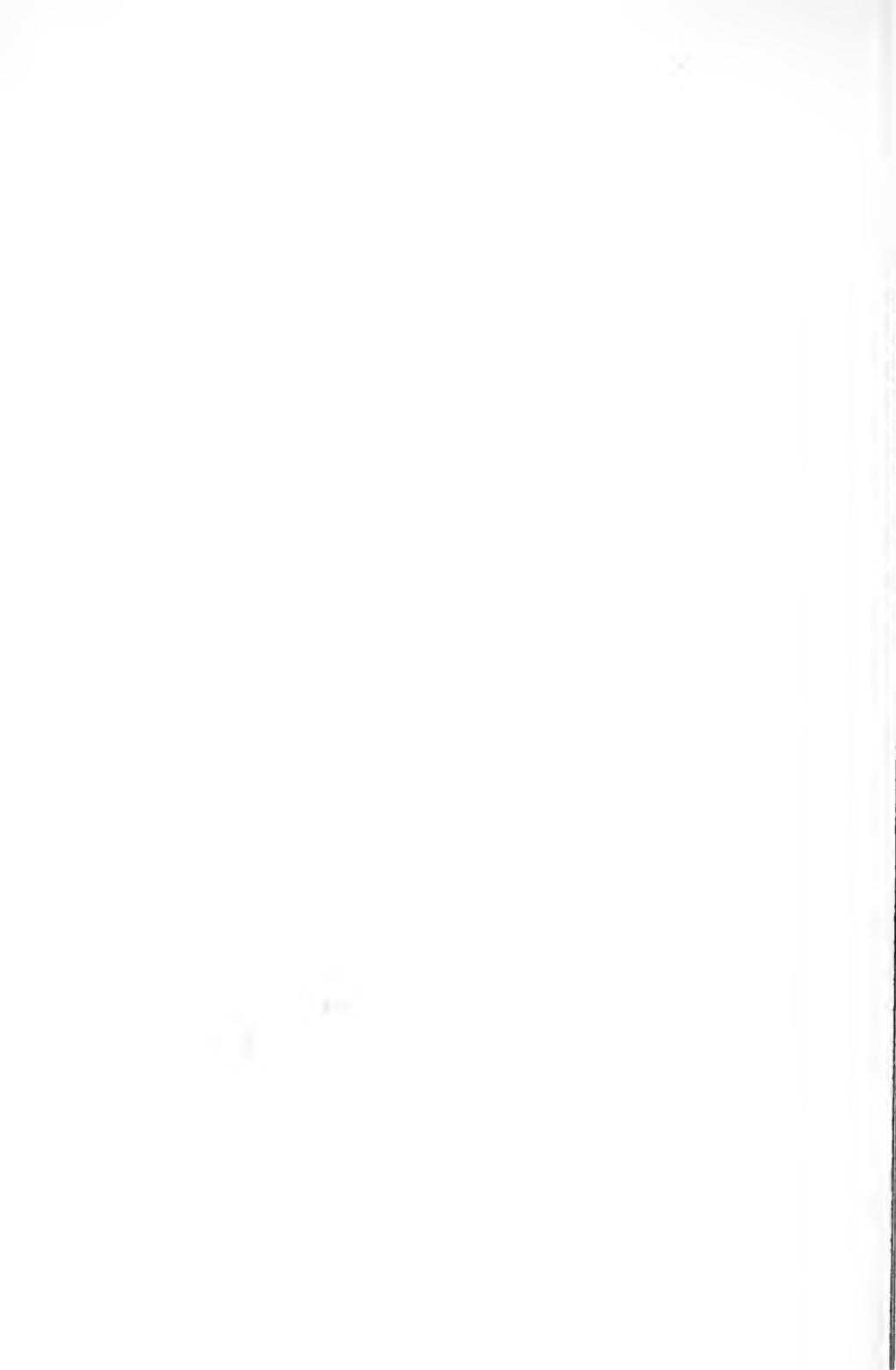
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COLLECTED POEMS.

THE LOOM OF YEARS

AND OTHER POEMS.

*DEDICATED TO
THE MEMORY OF JAMES PAYN.*

THE LOOM OF YEARS.

In the light of the silent stars that shine on the struggling sea,
In the weary cry of the wind and the whisper of flower and tree,
Under the breath of laughter, deep in the tide of tears,
I hear the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

The leaves of the winter wither and sink in the forest mould
To colour the flowers of April with purple and white and gold :
Light and scent and music die and are born again
In the heart of a gray-haired woman who wakes in a world of pain.

The hound, the fawn and the hawk, and the doves that
croon and coo,
We are all one woof of the weaving and the one warp
threads us through,
One flying cloud on the shuttle that carries our hopes and
fears
As it goes thro' the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the
Web of Years.

The green uncrumpling fern and the rustling dew-drenched
rose
Pass with our hearts to the Silence where the wings of
music close,
Pass and pass to the Timeless that never a moment mars,
Pass and pass to the Darkness that made the suns and
stars.

Has the soul gone out in the Darkness? Is the dust
sealed from sight?
Ah, hush, for the woof of the ages returns thro' the warp
of the night!
Never that shuttle loses one thread of our hopes and fears,
As it comes thro' the Loom of the Weaver that weaves
the Web of Years.

O, woven in one wide Loom thro' the throbbing weft of
the whole,
One in spirit and flesh, one in body and soul,
Tho' the leaf were alone in its falling, the bird in its hour
to die,
The heart in its muffled anguish, the sea in its mournful cry,

One with the flower of a day, one with the withered moon,
One with the granite mountains that melt into the noon,
One with the dream that triumphs beyond the light of the
spheres,
We come from the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the
Web of Years.

MICHAEL OAKTREE.

UNDER an arch of glorious leaves I passed
Out of the wood and saw the sickle moon
Floating in daylight o'er the pale green sea.

It was the quiet hour before the sun
Gathers the clouds to prayer and silently
Utters his benediction on the waves
That whisper round the death-bed of the day.
The labourers were returning from the farms
And children danced to meet them. From the doors
Of cottages there came a pleasant clink
Where busy hands laid out the evening meal.
From smouldering elms around the village spire
There soared and sank the caw of gathering rooks.
The faint-flushed clouds were listening to the tale
The sea tells to the sunset with one sigh.
The last white wistful sea-bird sought for peace,
And the last fishing-boat stole o'er the bar,
And fragrant grasses, murmuring a prayer,
Bowed all together to the holy west,
Bowed all together thro' the golden hush,
The breathing hush, the solemn scented hush,
The holy, holy hush of eventide.

And, in among the ferns that crowned the hill
With waving green and whispers of the wind,
A boy and girl, carelessly linking hands,
Into their golden dream drifted away.

On that rich afternoon of scent and song
Old Michael Oaktree died. It was not much
He wished for ; but indeed I think he longed
To see the light of summer once again
Blossoming o'er the far blue hills. I know
He used to like his rough-hewn wooden bench
Placed in the sun outside the cottage door
Where in the listening stillness he could hear,
Across the waving gilly-flowers that crowned
His crumbling garden wall, the long low sigh
Of supreme peace that whispers to the hills
The sacred consolation of the sea.
He did not hope for much : he longed to live
Until the winter came again, he said ;
But on the last sweet eve of May he died.

I wandered sadly through the dreaming lanes
Down to the cottage on that afternoon ;
For I had known old Michael Oaktree now
So many years, so many happy years.
When I was little he had carried me
High on his back to see the harvest home,
And given me many a ride upon his wagon
Among the dusty scents of sun and hay.
He showed me how to snare the bulky trout
That lurked under the bank of yonder brook.
Indeed, he taught me many a country craft,
For I was apt to learn, and, as I learnt,
I loved the teacher of that homely lore.
Deep in my boyish heart he shared the glad
Influence of the suns and winds and waves,
Giving my childhood what it hungered for—
The rude earth-wisdom of the primal man.

He had retained his childhood : Death for him
Had no more terror than his bed. He walked
With wind and sunlight like a brother, glad
Of their companionship and mutual aid.

We, toilers after truth, are weaned too soon
From earth's dark arms and naked barbarous breast.
Too soon, too soon, we leave the golden feast,
Fetter the dancing limbs and pluck the crown
Of roses from the dreaming brow. We pass
Our lives in most laborious idleness.
For we have lost the meaning of the world ;
We have gone out into the night too soon ;
We have mistaken all the means of grace
And over-rated our small power to learn.
And the years move so swiftly over us :
We have so little time to live in worlds
Unrealised and unknown realms of joy,
We are so old before we learn how vain
Our effort was, how fruitlessly we cast
Our Bread upon the waters, and how weak
Our hearts were, but our chance desires how strong !
Then, in the dark, our sense of light decays ;
We cannot cry to God as once we cried !
Lost in the gloom, our faith, perhaps our love,
Lies dead with years that never can return.

But Michael Oaktree was a man whose love
Had never waned through all his eighty years.
His faith was hardly faith. He seemed a part
Of all that he believed in. He had lived
In constant conversation with the sun,
The wind, the silence and the heart of peace ;
In absolute communion with the Power
That rules all action and all tides of thought,
And all the secret courses of the stars ;
The Power that still establishes on earth
Desire and worship, through the radiant laws
Of Duty, Love and Beauty ; for through these
As through three portals of the self-same gate
The soul of man attains infinity,
And enters into Godhead. So he gained
On earth a fore-taste of Nirvana, not

The void of eastern dream, but the desire
And goal of all of us, whether thro' lives
Innumerable, by slow degrees, we near
The death divine, or from this breaking body
Of earthly death we flash at once to God.
Through simple love and simple faith, this man
Attained a height above the hope of kings.

Yet, as I softly shut the little gate
And walked across the garden, all the scents
Of mingling blossom ached like inmost pain
Deep in my heart, I know not why. They seemed
Distinct, distinct as distant evening bells
Tolling, over the sea, a secret chime
That breaks and breaks and breaks upon the heart
In sorrow rather than in sound, a chime
Strange as a streak of sunset to the moon,
Strange as a rose upon a starlit grave,
Strange as a smile upon a dead man's lips ;
A chime of melancholy, mute as death
But strong as love, uttered in plangent tones
Of honeysuckle, jasmine, gilly-flowers,
Jonquils and aromatic musky leaves,
Lilac and lilies to the rose-wreathed porch.

At last I tapped and entered and was drawn
Into the bedroom of the dying man,
Who lay, propped up with pillows, quietly
Gazing; for through his open casement far
Beyond the whispers of the gilly-flowers
He saw the mellow light of eventide
Hallow the west once more; and, as he gazed,
I think I never saw so great a peace
On any human face. There was no sound
Except the slumbrous pulsing of a clock,
The whisper of the garden and, far off,
The sacred consolation of the sea.

His wife sat at his bed-side : she had passed
Her eightieth year ; her only child was dead.
She had been wedded more than sixty years,
And she sat gazing with the man she loved
Quietly, out into that unknown Deep.

A butterfly floated into the room
And back again, pausing awhile to bask
And wink its painted fans on the warm sill ;
A bird piped in the roses and there came
Into the childless mother's ears a sound
Of happy laughing children, far away.

Then Michael Oaktree took his wife's thin hand
Between his big rough hands. His eyes grew dark,
And, as he turned to her and died, he spoke
Two words of perfect faith and love—*Come soon!*

O then in all the world there was no sound
Except the slumbrous pulsing of a clock,
The whisper of the leaves and far away,
The infinite compassion of the sea.

But, as I softly passed out of the porch
And walked across the garden, all the scents
Of mingling blossom ached like inmost joy,
Distinct no more, but like one heavenly choir
Pealing one mystic music, still and strange
As voices of the holy Seraphim,
One voice of adoration, mute as love,
Stronger than death, and pure with wedded tones
Of honeysuckle, jasmine, gilly-flowers,
Jonquils and aromatic musky leaves,
Lilac and lilies to the garden gate.

O then indeed I knew how closely knit
To stars and flowers we are, how many means

Of grace there are for those that never lose
Their sense of membership in this divine
Body of God ; for those that all their days
Have walked in quiet communion with the Life
That keeps the common secret of the sun,
The wind, the silence and the heart of man.
There is one God, one Love, one everlasting
Mystery of Incarnation, one creative
Passion behind the many-coloured veil.
We have obscured God's face with partial truths,
The cause of all our sorrow and sin, our wars
Of force and thought, in this unheavened world.
Yet, by the battle of our partial truths,
The past against the present and the swift
Moment of passing joy against the deep
Eternal love, ever the weaker truth
Falls to the stronger, till once more we near
The enfolding splendour of the whole. Our God
Has been too long a partial God. We are all
Made in His image, men and birds and beasts,
Mountains and clouds and cataracts and suns,
With those great Beings above our little world,
A height beyond for every depth below,
Those long-forgotten Prinedoms, Virtues, Powers,
Existences that live and move in realms
As far beyond our thought as Europe lies
With all its little arts and sciences
Beyond the comprehension of the worm.
We are all partial images, we need
What lies beyond us to complete our souls ;
Therefore our souls are filled with a desire
And love which lead us towards the Infinity
Of Godhead that awaits us each and all.

Peacefully through the dreaming lanes I went.
The sun sank, and the birds were hushed. The stars
Trembled like blossoms in the purple trees.
But, as I paused upon the whispering hill

The mellow light still lingered in the west,
And dark and soft against that rosy depth
A boy and girl stood knee-deep in the ferns.
Dreams of the dead man's youth were in my heart,
Yet I was very glad ; and as the moon
Brightened, they kissed ; and, linking hand in hand,
Down to their lamp-lit home drifted away.

Under an arch of leaves, into the gloom
I went along the little woodland road,
And through the breathless hedge of hawthorn heard
Out of the deepening night, the long low sigh
Of supreme peace that whispers to the hills
The sacrament and sabbath of the sea,

IN THE HEART OF THE WOODS.

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THE Heart of the woods, I hear it, beating, beating afar,
In the glamour and gloom of the night, in the light of the
rosy star,
In the cold sweet voice of the bird, in the throb of the
flower-soft sea! . . .
For the Heart of the woods is the Heart of the world and
the Heart of Eternity,
Ay, and the burning passionate Heart of the heart in you
and me.

Love of my heart, love of the world, linking the golden
moon
With the flowery moths that flutter thro' the scented leaves
of June,
And the mind of man with beauty, and youth with the
dreaming night
Of stars and flowers and waters and breasts of glimmering
white,
And streaming hair of fragrant dusk and flying limbs of
lovely light;

Life of me, life of me, shining in sun and cloud and wind,
In the dark eyes of the fawn and the eyes of the hound
behind,

In the leaves that lie in the seed unsown, and the dream
of the babe unborn,
I feel you pulsing, flame of my blood, thro' flower and
root and thorn,
I feel you burning the boughs of night to kindle the fires
of morn.

Soul of me, soul of me, yearning wherever a lavrock sings,
Or the crimson gloom is winnowed by the whirr of wood-
doves' wings,
Or the spray of the foam-bow rustles in the white dawn
of the moon,
And mournful billows moan aloud, *Come soon, soon, soon,*
Come soon, O Death with the Heart of love and the secret
of the rune.

Heart of me, heart of me, heart of me, beating, beating
afar,
In the green gloom of the night, in the light of the rosy
star,
In the cold sweet voice of the bird, in the throb of the
flower-soft sea! . . .
O, the Heart of the woods is the Heart of the world and
the Heart of Eternity,
Ay, and the burning passionate Heart of the heart in you
and me.

II.

O, Death will never find us in the heart of the wood,
The song is in my blood, night and day:
We will pluck a scented petal from the Rose upon the
Rood
Where Love lies bleeding on the way.
We will listen to the linnet and watch the waters leap,
When the clouds go dreaming by,
And under the wild roses and the stars we will sleep,
And wander on together, you and I.

We shall understand the mystery that none has understood,

We shall know why the leafy gloom is green.

O, Death will never find us in the heart of the wood

When we see what the stars have seen !

We have heard the hidden song of the soft dews falling

At the end of the last dark sky,

Where all the sorrows of the world are calling,

We must wander on together, you and I.

They are calling, calling, *Away, come away !*

And we know not whence they call ;

For the song is in our hearts, we hear it night and day,

As the deep tides rise and fall :

O, Death will never find us in the heart of the wood,

While the hours and the years roll by !

We have heard it, we have heard it, but we have not
understood,

We must wander on together, you and I.

The wind may beat upon us, the rain may blind our eyes,

The leaves may fall beneath the winter's wing ;

But we shall hear the music of the dream that never dies,

And we shall know the secret of the Spring.

We shall know how all the blossoms of evil and of good

Are mingled in the meadows of the sky ;

And then—if Death can find us in the heart of the wood—

We shall wander on together, you and I.

ART.

(IMITATED FROM DE BANVILLE AND GAUTIER.)

YES ! Beauty still rebels :
Our dreams like clouds disperse :
 She dwells
In agate, marble, verse.

No false constraint be thine !
But, for right walking, choose
 The fine,
The strict cothurnus, Muse.

Vainly ye seek to escape
The toil ! The yielding phrase
 Ye shape
Is clay, not chrysoprase.

And all in vain ye scorn
That seeming ease which ne'er
 Was born
Of aught but love and care.

Take up the sculptor's tool !
Recall the gods that die
 To rule
In Parian o'er the sky.

For Beauty still rebels !
 Our dreams like clouds disperse :
 She dwells
 In agate, marble, verse.

II.

When Beauty from the sea,
 With breasts of whiter rose
 Than we
 Behold on earth, arose.

Naked thro' Time returned
 The Bliss of Heaven that day,
 And burned
 The dross of earth away.

Kings at her splendour quailed
 For all his triple steel
 She haled
 War at her chariot-wheel.

The rose and lily bowed
 To cast, of odour sweet
 A cloud
 Before her wandering feet.

And from her radiant eyes
 There shone on soul and sense
 The skies'
 Divine indifference.

O, mortal memory fond !
 Slowly she passed away
 Beyond
 The curling clouds of day.

Return, we cry, return,
Till in the sadder light
 We learn
That she was infinite.

The Dream that from the sea
With breasts of whiter rose
 Than we
Behold on earth, arose.

III.

Take up the sculptor's tool !
Recall the dreams that die
 To rule
In Parian o'er the sky ;

And kings that not endure
In bronze to re-ascend
 Secure
Until the world shall end.

Poet, let passion sleep
Till with the cosmic rhyme
 You keep
Eternal tone and time,

By rule of hour and flower,
By strength of stern restraint
 And power
To fail and not to faint.

The task is hard to learn
While all the songs of Spring
 Return
Along the blood and sing.

Yet hear—from her deep skies,
How Art, for all your pain,
Still cries
Ye must be born again!

Reject the wreath of rose,
Take up the crown of thorn
That shows
To-night a child is born.

The far immortal face
In chosen onyx fine
Enchase,
Delicate line by line.

Strive with Carrara, fight
With Parian, till there steal
To light
Apollo's pure profile.

Set the great lucid form
Free from its marble tomb
To storm
The heights of death and doom.

Take up the sculptor's tool!
Recall the gods that die
To rule
In Parian o'er the sky.

TRIOLET.

LOVE, awake ! Ah, let thine eyes
Open, clouded with thy dreams.
Now the shy sweet rosy skies,
Love, awake. Ah, let thine eyes
Dawn before the last star dies.
O'er thy breast the rose-light gleams :
Love, awake ! Ah, let thine eyes
Open, clouded with thy dreams.

A TRIPLE BALLAD OF OLD JAPAN.

IN old Japan, by creek and bay,
 The blue plum-blossoms blow,
 Where birds with sea-blue plumage gay
 Thro' sea-blue branches go :
 Dragons are coiling down below
 Like dragons on a fan ;
 And pig-tailed sailors lurching slow
 Thro' streets of old Japan.

There, in the dim blue death of day
 Where white tea-roses grow,
 Petals and scents are strewn astray
 Till night be sweet enow,
 Then lovers wander whispering low
 As lovers only can,
 Where rosy paper lanterns glow
 Thro' streets of old Japan.

From Wonderland to Yea-or-Nay
 The junks of Weal-and-Woe
 Dream on the purple water-way
 Nor ever meet a foe ;
 Though still, with stiff mustachio
 And crookéd ataghan,
 Their pirates guard with pomp and show
 The ships of old Japan.

That land is very far away,
We lost it long ago !
No fairies ride the cherry spray,
No witches mop and mow,
The violet wells have ceased to flow ;
And O, how faint and wan
The dawn on Fusiyama's snow,
The peak of old Japan.

Half smilingly our hearts delay,
Half mournfully forego
The blue fantastic twisted day
When faithful Konojo,
For small white Lily Hasu-ko
Knelt in the Butsudan,
And her tomb opened to bestrow
Lilies thro' old Japan.

There was a game they used to play
I' the San-ju-san-jen Dō,
They filled a little lacquer tray
With powders in a row,
Dry dust of flowers from Tashiro
To Mount Daimugenzan,
Dry little heaps of dust, but O
They breathed of old Japan.

Then knights in blue and gold array
Would on their thumbs bestow
A pinch from every heap and say,
With many a *hum* and *ho*,
What blossoms, nodding to and fro
For joy of maid or man,
Conceived the scents that puzzled so
The brains of old Japan.

The hundred ghosts have ceased to affray
The dust of Kyotó,
Ah yet, what phantom blooms a-sway
Murmur, a-loft, a-low,
In dells no scythe of death can mow,
No power of reason scan,
O, what Samúrai singers know
The Flower of old Japan?

Dry dust of blossoms, dim and gray,
Lost on the wind? Ah, no,
Hark, from yon clump of English may,
A cherub's mocking crow,
A sudden twang, a sweet, swift throë,
As Daisy trips by Dan,
And careless Cupid drops his bow
And laughs—from old Japan.

*There, in the dim blue death of day
Where white tea-roses grow,
Petals and scents are strewn astray
Till night be sweet enow,
Then lovers wander, whispering low:
As lovers only can,
Where rosy paper lanterns glow
Thro' streets of old Japan.*

THE SYMBOLIST.

HELP me to seek that unknown land !

I kneel before the shrine.

Help me to feel the hidden hand

That ever holdeth mine.

I kneel before the Word, I kneel
Before the Cross of flame,

I cry, as thro' the gloom I steal,
The glory of the Name.

Help me to mourn, and I shall love ;
What grief is like to mine ?

Crown me with thorn, the stars above
Shall in the circlet shine !

The Temple opens wide : none sees
The love, the dream, the light !

O, blind and finite, are not these
Blinding and infinite ?

The veil, the veil is rent : the skies
Are white with wings of fire,
Where victim souls triumphant rise
In torment of desire.

Help me to seek : I would not find,
For when I find I know

I shall have clasped the hollow wind
And built a house of snow.

HAUNTED IN OLD JAPAN.

MUSIC of the star-shine shimmering o'er the sea
 Mirror me no longer in the dusk of memory :
 Dim and white the rose-leaves drift along the shore.
 Wind among the roses, blow no more !

*All along the purple creek, lit with silver foam,
 Silent, silent voices, cry no more of home !
 Soft beyond the cherry-trees, o'er the dim lagoon,
 Dawns the crimson lantern of the large low moon.*

We that loved in April, we that turned away
 Laughing ere the wood-dove crooned across the May,
 Watch the withered rose-leaves drift along the shore.
 Wind among the roses, blow no more !

We the Sons of Reason, we that chose to bride
 Knowledge, and rejected the Dream that we denied,
 We that chose the Wisdom that triumphs for an hour,
 We that let the young love perish like a flower. . . .

We that hurt the heart we loved, we that went astray,
 We that in the darkness idly dreamed of day. . . .
 . . . Ah ! The dreary rose-leaves drift along the shore.
 Wind among the roses, blow no more !

Lonely starry faces, wonderful and white,
 Yearning with a cry across the dim sweet night,
 All our dreams are blown a-drift as flowers before a fan,
 All our hearts are haunted in the heart of old Japan.

Haunted, haunted, haunted—we that mocked and sinned
Hear the vanished voices wailing down the wind,
Watch the ruined rose-leaves drift along the shore.
Wind among the roses, blow no more!

*All along the purple creek, lit with silver foam,
Sobbing, sobbing voices, cry no more of home !
Soft beyond the cherry-trees, o'er the dim lagoon,
Dawns the crimson lantern of the large low moon.*

NECROMANCY.

(AFTER THE PROSE OF BAUDELAIRE.

THIS necromantic palace, dim and rich,
 Dim as a dream, rich as a reverie,
 I knew it all of old, surely I knew
 This floating twilight tinged with rose and blue,
 This moon-soft carven niche
 Whence the calm marble, wan as memory,
 Slopes to the wine-brimmed bath of cold dark fire
 Perfumed with old regret and dead desire.

There the soul, slumbering in the purple waves
 Of indolence, dreams of the phantom years,
 Dreams of the wild sweet flower of red young lips
 Meeting and murmuring in the dark eclipse
 Of joy, where pain still craves
 One tear of love to mingle with their tears,
 One passionate welcome ere the wild farewell,
 One flash of heaven across the fires of hell.

.

Queen of my dreams, queen of my pitiless dreams
 Dim idol, moulded of the wild white rose,
 Coiled like a panther in that silken gloom
 Of scented cushions, where the rich hushed room
 Breaks into soft warm gleams,
 As from her slumbrous clouds Queen Venus glows,
 Slowly thine arms up-lift to me, thine eyes
 Meet mine, without communion or surmise.

Here, at thy feet, I watched, I watched all day
 Night floating in thine eyes, then with my hands
 Covered my face from that dumb cry of pain :
 And when at last I dared to look again

My heart was far away,

Wrapt in the fragrant gloom of Eastern lands,
 Under the flower-white stars of tropic skies
 Where soft black floating flowers turned to . . . thine eyes.

I breathe, I breathe the perfume of thine hair
 Bury in thy deep hair my fevered face,
 Till as to men athirst in desert dreams
 The savour and colour and sound of cool dark streams
 Float round me everywhere,
 And memories float from some forgotten place,
 Fulfilling hopeless eyes with hopeless tears
 And fleeting light of unforgotten years.

Dim clouds of music in the dim rich hours
 Float to me thro' the twilight of thine hair,
 And sails like blossoms float o'er purple seas,
 And under dark green skies the soft warm breeze
 Washes dark fruit, dark flowers,
 Dark tropic maidens in some island lair
 Couched on the warm sand nigh the creaming foam
 To dream and sing their tawny lovers home.

Lost in the magic ocean of thine hair
 I find the haven of the heart of song :
 There tired ships rest against the pale red sky !
 And yet again there comes a thin sad cry
 And all the shining air
 Fades, where the tall dark singing seamen throng
 From many generations, many climes,
 Fades, fades, as it has faded many times.

I hear the sweet cool whisper of the waves !
 Drowned in the slumbrous billows of thine hair,
 I dream as one that sinks thro' passionate hours
 In a strange ship's wild fraughtage of dark flowers
 Culled for pale poets' graves ;
 And opiate odours load the empurpled air
 That flows and droops, a dark resplendent pall
 Under the floating wreaths funereal.

Under the heavy midnight of thine hair
 An altar flames with spices of the south
 Burning my flesh and spirit in the flame ;
 Till, looking tow'rds the land from whence I came
 I find thy comfort there,
 And all the darkness to my thirsty mouth
 Is fire, but always and in every place
 Blossoms the secret wonder of thy face.

• • • • •

The walls, the very walls are woven of dreams,
 All undefined by blasphemies of art !
 Here, pure from finite hues the very night
 Conceives the mystic harmonies of light,
 Delicious glooms and gleams ;
 And sorrow falls in rose-leaves on the heart,
 And pain that yearns upon the passing hour
 Is but a perfume haunting a dead flower.

Hark, as a hammer on a coffin falls
 A knock upon the door ! The colours wane,
 The dreams vanish ! And leave that foul white scar,
 Tattoo'd with dreadful marks, the old calendar
 Blotching the blistered walls !
 The winter whistles thro' a shivered pane,
 And scatters on the bare boards at my feet
 These poor soiled manuscripts, torn, incomplete. . . .

The scent of opium floats about my breath ;

But Time resumes his dark and hideous reign ;
And, with him, hideous memories troop, I know.
Hark, how the battered clock ticks, to and fro,—

Life, Death—Life, Death—Life, Death—

O fool to cry ! O, slave to bow to pain,
Coward to live thus tortured with desire
By demon nerves in hells of sensual fire.

THE MYSTIC.

WITH wounds out-reddening every moon-washed rose
 King Love went thro' earth's garden-close !

From that first gate of birth in the golden gloom,
 I traced Him. Thorns had frayed His garment's hem,
 Ay, and His flesh ! I marked, I followed them
 Down to that threshold of—the tomb ?

And there Love vanished, yet I entered ! Night
 And Doubt mocked at the dwindling light :

Strange claw-like hands flung me their shadowy hate.
 I climb the dreadful stairways of desire
 Between a thousand eyes and wings of fire
 And knocked upon the second Gate.

The second Gate ! When, like a warrior helmed,
 In battle on battle overwhelmed,

My soul lay stabbed by all the swords of sense,
 Blinded and stunned by stars and flowers and trees,
 Did I not struggle to my bended knees
 And wrestle with Omnipotence ?

Did earth not flee before me, when the breath
 Of worship smote her with strange death,

Withered her gilded garment, broke her sword,
 Shattered her graven images and smote
 All her light sorrows thro' the breast and throat
 Whose death-cry crowned me God and Lord ?

Yea, God and Lord ! Had tears not purged my sight ?
I saw the myriad gates of Light
Opening and shutting in each way-side flower,
And like a warder in the gleam of each,
Death, whispering in some strange eternal speech
To every passing hour.

The second Gate ? Was I not born to pass
A million ? Though the skies be brass
And the earth iron, shall I not win thro' all ?
Shall I who made the infinite heavens my mark
Shrink from this first wild horror of the dark,
These formless gulfs, these glooms that crawl ?

Never was mine that easy faithless hope
Which makes all life one flowery slope
To heaven ! Mine be the vast assaults of doom,
Trumpets, defeats, red anguish, age-long strife,
Ten million deaths, ten million gates to life,
The insurgent heart that bursts the tomb.

Vain, vain, unutterably vain are all
The sights and sounds that sink and fall,
The words and symbols of this fleeting breath :
Shall I not drown the finite in the Whole,
Cast off this body and complete my soul
Thro' deaths beyond this gate of death ?

It will not open ! Through the bars I see
The glory and the mystery,
Wind upward ever ! The earth-dawn breaks ! I bleed
With beating here for entrance. Hark, O hark,
Love, Love, return and give me the great Dark,
Which is the Light of Life indeed.

THE STATUE.

SLOWLY he bent above her jewelled hand
And kissed it. But the boy had little heart
To woo the glad young bride that others chose
And thrust upon him as his princedom's prize.
The daylight withered on her palace towers
And all the windows darkened as he went
Wearily homeward, tortured with his thoughts,
Tired with his task of wooing without love,
Tired with the toil of all that empty speech,
And almost wishing loveless death would stay
The mockery of the loveless marriage morn.

Round him the woods, tossing their sombre plumes,
Shed heavy, wet, funereal fragrances ;
And the wind uttering one low tragic cry
Perished. It was a night when wanderers
Bewildered there might dread some visible Death
Urging his paie horse thro' the dim blue light
Of haggard groves and poppy-haunted glades.

His path fainted into the forest gloom
Like a thin aisle along the wilderness
Of some immense cathedral long ago
Buried at some huge epoch of the world
Far down, under the mountains and the sea ;
A wealth of endless vistas rich and dark
With secret hues and carvings and—his foot paused—
A white breast orient in the softening gloom,

A cold white arm waving above the shrine,
A sweet voice floating in a dreamy song
Till all the leafy capitals awoke
And whispered in reply ! Was it the wind
Wafting a globe of flowery mist, a sigh
Of wild-rose incense wandering in a dream ?

Far, far away, as through an eastern window,
Through low grey clouds, painted in curling folds,
The moon arose and peered into the nave,
The moon arose behind the dark-armed woods
And made the boughs look older than the world.

And slowly down the thin sad aisle the prince
Came with his eighteen summers. His dark eyes
Burned with the strange new hunger of his heart.

He knew how beautiful she was—his bride,
Whom others chose, but he had ever found
His love in all things, not in one alone.
He found the radiant idol of his moods
In waves and flowers and winds, in books and dreams,
In paintings and in music, in strange eyes
And passing faces ; and too well he knew
The Light that gave the radiance must still fly
From face to face, from form to form. A word,
A breath, a smile too swift, and at his feet
There lay some broken idol, some dead husk,
And he must seek elsewhere that archetype
Reflected from some other shape of earth,
Darkly, as in a glass. Indeed his love
Dwelt deeper in the night than she who stole
In moonbeams on Endymion. His heart
Was lost beyond the shining of the stars.
His hopes were in his visions : like a boy
He dreamed of fame ; yet all the more his love
Dwelt in the past among the mighty dead.
The emerald gloom, the rosy sunset skies

He loved for their old legends, and again
 Wandered by lotus isles and heard the song
 Of sirens from a shore of yellow sand.
 The vanished Grecian glory filled his soul
 With mystic harmonies that in broad noon
 Added a wonder to the white-curled clouds,
 A colour and a cry, a living voice,
 Almost the visible Presences divine
 To distant sea-horizons, dim blue hills,
 Earth's fading bounds and faint infinities.

And now, as down the thin sad aisle the prince
 Went footing tow'rs the moon, there came once more
 A gleam as of a white breast in the dark,
 A waving of a white arm in the dusk,
 A sweet voice floating in a dreamy song.
 He paused, he listened. Then his heart grew faint
 Within him, as there slowly rose and fell
 A sound of many voices drawing nigh
 That mingled with his ancient dreams a song
 Still scented like the pages of a book
 With petals of the bygone years. He fell
 Prone on his face and wept, for all his life
 Thrilled in him as a wind-swept harp is thrilled ;
 And all the things that he had once believed
 Seemed shattered by that wonder, and the world
 Became his dreams and he a little child.
 Slowly the distant multitude drew nigh,
 And softly as a sleeping sea they sang.

*Hast thou no word for us who darkly wander,
 No lamp to guide our weary feet,
 No song to cheer our way ?
 Where dark pine-forests sigh o'er blue Scamander,
 The long gray winds are sweet,
 And the deep moan of doves is heard ;
 While shadowy Ida floats in cloudless day ;
 Hast thou no word ?*

*Hast thou forgotten the almighty morning
 That smote upon the cold green wrinkled sea
 And edged the ripples with a rosy light ;
 And made us count cold death a thing for scorning
 Before the love of thee,
 O, mother, wave-begotten ?
 Yea, sunny day was worth the last long night !
 Hast thou forgotten ?*

Whispering ever nearer like a wind
 The song sank into sweetest undertone,
 While the faint murmur of innumerable feet
 Came onward thro' the moonlit purple glades.
 The prince arose to listen. Those wild tears
 Yet glistened in his eyes against the moon,
 His dread seemed lost in a great conscious dream :
 For, one by one, like shadows of his mind,
 Sad voices murmured near him in the dark
 And gave his grief their own melodious pain.

I.

*Forbid me not ! To-night the world's heart falters,
 To-morrow it may be the sun will shine,
 To-morrow it may be the birds will sing.
 O, Earth, my mother, the flame dies on thine altars !
 I would my hands were folded fast in thine,
 That thou wouldest make me sleep,
 Wrapt in thy mantle deep,
 Far, far from sound or sight of anything !*

II.

*Forbid me not ! No more the dark sweet forest
 At moondawn murmurs with a holy song !
 And immemorial love, ah ! whither flown ?*

*No more at noon the light that thou adorest,
O mother, bathes the golden Oread throng !
Anadyomene
Is buried in the sea,
The gods are gone, Olympus is alone.*

III.

*Forbid me not ! Perchance a brighter morrow
Than e'er the world hath seen it yet may see ;
But I, what should I do the while but sleep ?
Sleep thro' the years of suffering and sorrow,
Sleep where the old world sleeps in peace with thee,
Sleep, dust in the old fair dust,
Sleep, in the same deep trust,
That all is well where none can wish to weep.*

Perchance they were the shadows of his mind
That sang to him ; but o'er his heart they crept
As winds of April o'er the budding leaves.
And still the rumour of innumerable feet
Stole like a strain of music thro' the woods
Making the darkness wither into dreams ;
Till, all at once, the moonlight blossomed and broke
And strowed the splendour of its quivering sprays
And white rent rose-leaves thro' the throbbing night.
Pansy and violet woke in every glade,
In every glade the violet and the pansy,
The wild rose and the white wood-bine awoke.
The night murmured her passion, the dark night
Murmured her passion to the listening earth.
The leaves whispered together. Every flower
With naked beauty wounded every wind.
Under the white strange moon that stole to gaze
As once on Latmos, every poppied dell
Rustled, the green ferns quivered in the brake,
The green ferns rustled and bowed down to kiss

Their image in the shadowy forest pools.
 Then one last wind of fragrance heralding
 That mystic multitudinous approach
 Wandered along the wilderness of bloom
 And sank, and all was very still. Far, far,
 It seemed, beyond the shores of earth, the sea
 Drew in deep breaths, as if asleep.

All slept.

Then like a cry in heaven the sudden hymn
 Rose in the stillness, and across the light
 That brooded on the long thin blossoming aisle,
 Dim troops of naked maidens carrying flowers
 Glided out of the purple woods and sank
 Like music into the purple woods again.

But, when the last had vanished, the white moon
 Withered, and wintry darkness held the trees,
 And the prince reeled, dazed, till one strange cold voice
 Out of the dying murmur seemed to thrill
 The very fountains of his inmost life.
 O, like another moon upon his night
 That voice arose and comforted the world.
 With one great sob he plunged into the wood
 And followed blindly on the fainting hymn.

Blindly he stumbled onward, till the sound
 Was heard no more ; but where the gloom grew sweet
 And sweeter, where the mingled scent of flowers
 And floating hair wandered upon the dark,
 Where glimpses pale and rosy moonlit gleams
 Like ghosts of butterflies, fluttering softly
 Thro' darkness tow'rds the sun, coloured the night,
 He followed, thorn-pierced, bleeding, followed still.
 Then, from his feet, a vista flowed away
 Duskily purple as a sea-ward stream
 With obscure lilies floating on its breast
 Between wide banks of dark wild roses, grave
 With secret meanings, deep and still and strange

As death ; but, at the end, a little glade
Glimmered with hinted marble that implored
Its old forgotten ritual. For a breath,
He thought he saw that wave of worshippers
Foam into flowers against a rosy porch,
Leaving a moment after, only a dream
Amongst the gleaming ruins, of laughter flown,
And bright limbs dashed with dew and stained with wine.

But suddenly, as he neared the porch, the prince
Paused ; for the deep voluptuous violet gloom
That curtained all the temple thrilled, and there,
There in the midst stood out the sculptured form
Of Her, the white Thalassian, wonderful,
A Flower of foam, our Lady of the sea.

Then, with wide eyes of dream, the boy came stealing
Softly. His red lips parted as he gazed,
His head bowed down, he sank upon his knees,
Down on his knees he sank before her feet,
Before her feet he sank, with one low moan,
One passionate moan of worship and of love.
In a strange agony of adoration
He whispered where he lay—O, beautiful,
Beautiful One, take pity. Ah, no, no !
Be as thou art, eternal, without grief,
Beautiful everlasting. He rose ;
And timidly he lifted up his face
To hers, and saw that sweet and cold regard,
The pitiless divine indifference
Of Aphrodite gazing thro' the years
To some eternal sea that calls her still.
O, timidly he lifted up his lips
And touched her, softly as a flower might kiss,
Once, on the cold strange lips.

There came a cry
Shattering the nerves with agonies of sweetness :
The marble moved, the cold white marble moved,

And every movement was an agony
Of bliss. The marble softened into life,
The marble softened as a clouding moon
That takes the first faint rose-flush of the day.
The lovely face bent down upon the boy,
The soft white radiant arms enfolded him.
She kissed him, once, upon his curved red lips,
Then—like a broken flower—down at her feet
He fell. The temple shone with sudden fire,
And through the leaves the wild miraculous dawn
Tumbled its ruinous loads of breathless bloom
On all the glades, and morning held the world.

But, ere the morn had melted into noon,
There came a grey-haired man before the King
And told that, as he went to gather wood,
Soon after dawn, he heard a bitter cry
Near that old ruined temple which, some said,
Was haunted still by wandering pagan souls
Too foul for heaven, yet ignorant of hell;
But he believed it not, and therefore crept
Quietly near to watch and saw the prince
Dead, on the ground; and over him there bent
A white form, beautiful, but beckoning
To One more beautiful in the morning clouds,
The Mother of Bethlehem, to whom he prayed
Himself, but never knew her till that hour
So beautiful. For all the light that shone
From Aphrodite, shone from that deep breast
August in mother-love, with three-fold grace,
Enfolding all the lesser and raising all
That wind-borne beauty of the wandering foam
To steadfast heavens of more harmonious law;
And over her, in turn, diviner skies
Brooded, deep heavens enfolding all the world,
Himself, the woods, the dead prince and those twain
Long held as deadly opposites, but now
Strangely at one, though one was but the heaven

Of colour and light in the other's breast and brow,
And both but beacons to the heavens beyond.

But when he led a silent troop of men
Far thro' the tangled coves to that glade,
They found the young prince like a broken flower
Lying, one sun-browned arm behind his head,
And on his dead cold lips a strange sweet smile.
Over him stood the statue, cold and calm ;
And he who urged the loveless wooing crept
Back, for he had no heart to face again
The pitiless divine indifference
Of Aphrodite, queen of laughter and love
On old Olympus, but to this great dawn
A roseate Hebe, handmaid to the heavens
Of beauty, with her long white glowing side,
Pure sacramental hands and radiant face
Uplifted in that lovelier servitude
Whose name is perfect freedom, ministrant
In harmony with golden laws, thro' all
The passion-broken, cloudy, fleeting years,
To that eternal Love which calls her still.

THE FLOWER OF OLD JAPAN.

*DEDICATED TO
CAROL, A LITTLE MAIDEN OF MIYAKO.*

PERSONS OF THE TALE.

OURSELVES.	CREEPING SIN.
THE TALL THIN MAN.	THE MAD MOONSHEE.
THE DWARF BEHIND THE TWISTED	THE NAMELESS ONE.
PEAR-TREE.	

Pirates, Mandarins, Bonzes, Priests, Jugglers, Merchants,
Ghastroi, Weirdrians, &c.

PRELUDE.

You that have known the wonder zone
Of islands far away,
You that have heard the dinky bird
And roamed in rich Cathay,
You that have sailed o'er unknown seas
To woods of Amfalula trees
Where craggy dragons play,
O, girl or woman, boy or man,
You've plucked the Flower of Old Japan !

Do you remember the blue stream,
The bridge of pale bamboo,
The path that seemed a twisted dream
Where everything came true ;
The purple cherry-trees, the house
With jutting eaves below the boughs,
The mandarins in blue,
With tiny, tapping, tilted toes,
And curious curved mustachios ?

The road to Old Japan ! you cry,
And is it far or near ?
Some never find it till they die,
Some find it everywhere,
The road where restful Time forgets
His weary thoughts and wild regrets
And calls the golden year
Back in a fairy dream to smile
On young and old a little while.

Some seek it with a blazing sword,
And some with old blue plates,
Some with a miser's golden hoard,
Some with a book of dates,
Some with a box of paints ; a few
Whose loads of truth would ne'er pass through
The first white fairy gates,
And, O, how shocked they are to find
That truths are false when left behind !

Do you remember all the tales
That Tusitala told,
When first we plunged thro' purple vales
In quest of buried gold ?
Do you remember how he said
That if we fell and hurt our head
Our hearts must still be bold,
And we must never mind the pain
But rise up and go on again ?

Do you remember ? Yes ; I know
You must remember still.
He left us, not so long ago,
Carolling with a will,
Because he knew that he should lie
Under the comfortable sky
Upon a lonely hill,
In Old Japan, when day was done,
“ Dear Robert Louis Stevenson.”

And there he knew that he should find
The hills that haunt us now,
The whaups that cried upon the wind
His heart remembered how.
And friends he loved and left, to roam
Far from the pleasant hearth of home,
Should touch his dreaming brow ;
Where fishes fly and birds have fins,
And children teach the mandarins.

Ah, let us follow, follow far
Beyond the purple seas,
Beyond the rosy foaming bar,
The coral reef, the trees,
The land of parrots, and the wild
That rolls before the fearless child
Its ancient mysteries :
Onward and onward, if we can,
To Old Japan—to Old Japan.

PART I.—EMBARKATION.

WHEN the firelight, red and clear,
 Flutters in the black wet pane,
It is very good to hear
 Howling winds and trotting rain :
It is very good indeed,
 When the nights are dark and cold.
Near the friendly hearth to read
 Tales of ghosts and buried gold.

So with cosy toes and hands
 We were dreaming, just like you ;
Till we thought of palmy lands
 Coloured like a cockatoo.
All in drowsy nursery nooks
 Near the clutching fire we sat,
Searching quaint old story-books
 Piled upon the furry mat.

Something haunted us that night
 Like a half-remembered name.
Worn old pages in that light
 Seemed the same, yet not the same :
Curling in the pleasant heat
 Smoothly as a shell-shaped fan,
O ! they breathed and smelt so sweet
 When we turned to Old Japan !

Suddenly we thought we heard
 Someone tapping on the wall,
 Tapping, tapping like a bird,
 Till a panel seemed to fall
 Quietly ; and a tall thin man
 Stepped into the glimmering room,
 And he held a little fan,
 And he waved it in the gloom.

Curious reds, and golds, and greens
 Danced before our startled eyes,
 Birds from painted Indian screens,
 Beads, and shells, and dragon-flies ;
 Wings, and flowers, and scent, and flame,
 Fans and fish and heliotrope ;
 Till the magic air became
 Like a dream kaleidoscope.

Then he told us of a land
 Far across a fairy sea ;
 And he waved his thin white hand
 Like a flower, melodiously ;
 While a red and blue macaw
 Perched upon his pointed head,
 And as in a dream, we saw
 All the curious things he said.

Tucked in tiny palanquins,
 Magically swinging there,
 Flowery-kirtled mandarins
 Fleeted through the scented air.
 Wandering dogs and prowling cats
 Grinned at fish in painted lakes ;
 Cross-legged conjurers on mats
 Fluted low to listening snakes.

For black bodies on the shore
 Warmed where singing, fast and fit,
 Boys in long blue garments bore
 Boses in a golden jar.
 White as narrow dragon ships
 Floating on the silent sea
 Squinted gods with dreadful lips
 Leered and smiled mysteriously.

Like an old armed alone
 Warmed by secret evil eyes
 Where the soft whispering brook
 Shuddering in the darkness lies,
 And the wind whined things
 That passed the jewel and they came;
 They were wealthier than kings
 If we could but be the same.

Yes, we knew a hundred ways
 We might use it if we could
 To be happy all our days
 As an Indian in a wood;
 No more faint lesson than
 No more sorrow no more care;
 So we thought that we would use
 If he kindly lead us there.

But then he waved his fan
 And he vanished through the wall;
 Yet as in a dream we ran
 Running after one and all;
 Never pausing once or think
 Running after him we sped.
 For we saw the robe of pink
 Floating backward as he fled.

Down a secret passage deep,
Under roofs of spidery stairs,
Where the bat-winged nightmares creep,
And a sheeted phantom glares
Rushed we—ah! how strange it was
Where no human watcher stood—
Till we reached a gate of glass
Opening on a flowery wood.

Where the rose-pink robe had flown,
Borne by swifter feet than ours.
On to Wonder-Wander town,
Through the wood of monstrous flowers—
Mailed in monstrous gold and blue
Dragon-flies like peacocks fed,
Butterflies like carpets, too,
Softly fluttered overhead—

Down the valley, tip-a-toe,
Where the broad-limbed giants lie
Snoring, as when long ago
Jack on a bean-stalk scaled the sky:
Slowly, softly towards the town
Stole we past old dreams again,
Castles long since battered down,
Dungeons of forgotten pain.

Noonday brooded on the wood.
Evening caught us ere we crept
Where a twisted pear-tree stood.
And a dwarf behind it slept
Round his scraggy throat he wore,
Knotted tight, a scarlet scarf.
Timidly we watched him snore,
For he seemed a surly dwarf.

Yet, he looked so very small,
 He could hardly hurt us much ;
 We were nearly twice as tall,
 So we woke him with a touch
 Gently, and in tones polite,
 Asked him to direct our path.
 O ! his wrinkled eyes grew bright
 Green with ugly gnomish wrath.

He seemed to choke,
 And gruffly spoke,
 " You're lost : deny it, if you can !
 You want to know
 The way to go ?
 There's no such place as Old Japan.

" You want to seek—
 No, no, don't speak !
 You mean you want to steal a fan.
 You want to see
 The fields of tea ?
 They don't grow tea in Old Japan.

" In China, well
 Perhaps you'd smell
 The cherry bloom : that's if you ran
 A million miles
 And jumped the stiles,
 And never dreamed of Old Japan.

" What, palanquins,
 And mandarins ?
 And, what d'you say, a blue divan
 And what ? Hee ! hee !
 You'll never see
 A pig-tailed head in Old Japan.

" You'd take away
 The ruby, hey ?
I never heard of such a plan
 Upon my word
 It's quite absurd
 There's not a gem in Old Japan !

" Oh, dear me, no
 You'd better go
 Straight home again, my little man :
 Ah, well, you'll see
 But don't blame me ;
I don't believe in Old Japan."

Then, before we could obey,
 O'er our startled heads he cast,
 Spider-like, a webby grey
 Net that held us prisoned fast !
 How we screamed, he only grinned.
 It was such a lonely place ;
 And he said we should be pinned
 In his human beetle-case.

Out he dragged a monstrous box
 From a cave behind the tree !
 It had four-and-twenty locks,
 But he could not find the key,
 And his face grew very pale
 When a sudden voice began
 Drawing nearer through the vale,
 Singing songs of Old Japan.

SONG.

*Satin sails in a crimson dawn
 Over the silky silver sea ;
 Purple veils of the dark withdrawn ;
 Heavens of pearl and porphyry ;*

*Purple and white in the morning light
 Over the water the town we knew,
 In tiny state, like a willow-plate,
 Shone, and behind it the hills were blue.*

*There, we remembered, the shadows pass
 All day long like dreams in the night;
 There, in the meadows of dim blue grass,
 Crimson daisies are ringed with white;
 There the roses flutter their petals,
 Over the meadows they take their flight;
 There the moth that sleepily settles
 Turns to a flower in the warm soft light.*

*There when the sunset colours the streets
 Everyone buys at wonderful stalls
 Toys and chocolates, guns and sweets,
 Ivory pistols, and Persian shawls:
 Everyone's pockets are crammed with gold;
 Nobody's heart is worn with care,
 Nobody ever grows tired and old,
 And nobody talks of bed-time there.*

*There with a hat like a round white dish
 Upside down on each pig-tailed head,
 Jugglers offer you snakes and fish,
 Dreams and dragons and gingerbread,
 Beautiful books with marvellous pictures.
 Painted pirates and streaming gore,
 And everyone reads, without any strictures,
 Tales he remembers for evermore.*

*There when the dim blue daylight lingers
 Listening, and the West grows holy,
 Singers crouch with their long white fingers
 Floating over the zithern slowly:*

*Paper lamps with a peachy bloom
 Burn above on the dim blue bough,
 While the zitherns gild the gloom
 With curious music ! I hear it now !*

Now ! and at that mighty word
 Holding out his magic fan,
 Through the waving flowers appeared
 Suddenly, the tall thin man :
 And we saw the crumpled dwarf
 Trying to hide behind the tree,
 But his knotted scarlet scarf
 Made him very plain to see.

Like a soft and smoky cloud
 Passed the webby net away ,
 While its owner squealing loud
 Down behind the pear-tree lay ;
 For the tall thin man came near,
 And his words were dark and gruff,
 And he swung the dwarf in the air
 By his long and scraggy scruff.

There he kickled whimpering.
 But our rescuer touched the box,
 Open with a sudden spring
 Clashed the four-and-twenty locks.
 Then he crammed the dwarf inside,
 And the locks all clattered tight :
 Four-and-twenty times he tried
 Whether they were fastened right.

Ah, he led us on our road,
 Showed us Wonder-Wander town ;
 Then he fled : behind him flowed
 Once again the rose-pink gown

Down the long deserted street,
All the windows winked like eyes,
And our little trotting feet
Echoed to the starry skies.

Low and long for evermore
Where the Wonder-Wander sea
Whispers to the wistful shore
Purple songs of mystery,
Down the shadowy quay we came—
Though it hides behind the hill
You will find it just the same
And the seamen singing still.

There we chose a ship of pearl,
And her milky silken sail
Seemed by magic to unfurl,
Puffed before a fairy gale ;
Shimmering o'er the purple deep,
Out across the silvery bar,
Softly as the wings of sleep
Sailed we towards the morning star.

Over us the skies were dark,
Yet we never needed light ;
Softly shone our tiny bark
Gliding through the solemn night ;
Softly bright our moony gleam
Glimmered o'er the glistening waves,
Like a cold sea-maiden's dream
Globed in twilit ocean caves.

So all night our shallop passed
Many a haunt of old desire,
Blurs of savage blossom massed
Red above a pirate-fire ;

Huts that gloomed and glanced among
 Fruitage dipping in the blue;
Songs the sirens never sung,
 Shores Ulysses never knew.

All our fairy rigging shone
 Richly as a rainbow seen
Where the moonlight floats upon
 Gossamers of gold and green;
All the tiny spars were bright;
 Beaten gold the bowsprit was;
But our pilot was the night,
 And our chart a looking-glass.

PART II.—THE ARRIVAL.

WITH rosy finger-tips the Dawn
 Drew back the silver veils,
Till lilac shimmered into lawn
 Above the satin sails ;
And o'er the waters, white and wan,
 In tiny patterned state,
We saw the streets of Old Japan
 Shine, like a willow plate.

O, many a milk-white pigeon roams
 The purple cherry crops,
The mottled miles of pearly domes,
 And blue pagoda tops,
The river with its golden canes
 And dark piratic dhows,
To where beyond the twisting vanes
 The burning mountain glows.

A snow-peak in the silver skies
 Beyond that magic world,
We saw the great volcano rise
 With incense o'er it curled,
Whose tiny thread of rose and blue
 Has risen since time began,
Before the first enchanter knew
 The peak of Old Japan.

Nobody watched us quietly steer
The pinnace to the painted pier,
Except one pig-tailed mandarin,
Who sat upon a chest of tea
Pretending not to hear or see! . . .

His hands were very long and thin,
His face was very broad and white ;
And O, it was a fearful sight
To see him sit alone and grin !

His grin was very sleek and sly :
Timidly we passed him by !

He did not seem at all to care :
So, thinking we were safely past,
We ventured to look back at last.

O, dreadful blank !—*He was not there !*
He must have hid behind his chest :
We did not wait to see the rest.

But, as in reckless haste we ran,
We came upon the tall thin man,
Who called to us and waved his fan,
And offered us his palanquin :
He said we must not go alone
To seek the ruby wishing-stone,
Because the white-faced mandarin
Would dog our steps for many a mile,
And sit upon each purple stile
Before we came to it, and smile
And smile. His name was Creeping Sin.

He played with children's beating hearts,
And stuck them full of poisoned darts
And long green thorns that stabbed and stung :
He'd watch until we tried to speak,
Then thrust inside his pasty cheek
His long, white, slimy tongue :

And smile at everything we said ;
And sometimes pat us on the head,
And say that we were very young :
He was a cousin of the man
Who said that there was no Japan.

And night and day this Creeping Sin
Would follow the path of the palanquin ;
Yet if we still were fain to touch
The ruby, we must have no fear,
Whatever we might see or hear,
And the tall thin man would take us there ;
He did not fear that Sly One much,
Except perhaps on a moonless night,
Nor even then if the stars were bright.

So, in the yellow palankeen
We swung along in state between
Twinkling domes of gold and green
Through the rich bazaar,
Where the cross-legged merchants sat,
Old and almond-eyed and fat,
Each upon a gorgeous mat,
Each in a cymar ;
Each in crimson samite breeches,
Watching his barbaric riches.

Cherry blossom breathing sweet
Whispered o'er the dim blue street
Where with fierce uncertain feet
Tawny pirates walk :
All in belts and baggy blouses,
Out of dreadful opium houses,
Out of dens where Death carouses,
Horribly they stalk ;
Girt with ataghan and dagger,
Right across the road they swagger.

And where the cherry orchards blow,
We saw the maids of Miyako,
Swaying softly to and fro

Through the dimness of the dance :
Like sweet thoughts that shine through dreams
They glided, wreathing rosy gleams,
With stately sounds of silken streams,

And many a slim kohl-lidded glance ;
Then they fluttered with tiny rose-bud feet
To a soft *frou-frou* and a rhythmic beat
As the music shimmered, pursuit, retreat,

“ Hands across, retire, advance ! ”
And again it changed and the glimmering throng
Faded into a distant song.

SONG.

*The maidens of Miyako
Dance in the sunset hours,
Deep in the sunset glow,
Under the cherry flowers.*

*With dreamy hands of pearl
Floating like butterflies,
Dimly the dancers whirl
As the rose light dies ;*

*And their floating gowns, their hair
Upbound with curious pins,
Fade thro' the darkening air
With the dancing mandarins.*

And then, as we went, the tall thin man
Explained the manners of Old Japan ;
If you pitied a thing, you pretended to sneer :

Yet if you were glad you ran to buy
A captive pigeon and let it fly ;
And, if you were sad, you took a spear
To wound yourself, for fear your pain
Should quietly grow less again.

And, again he said, if we wished to find
The mystic City that enshrined

The stone so few on earth had found,
We must be very brave ; it lay
A hundred haunted leagues away,

Past many a griffon-guarded ground,
In depths of dark and curious art,
Where passion-flowers enfold apart
The Temple of the Flaming Heart,
The City of the Secret Wound.

About the fragrant fall of day
We saw beside the twisted way

A blue-domed tea-house, bossed with gold ;
Hungry and thirsty we entered in :
How should we know what Creeping Sin
Had breathed in that Emperor's ear who sold
His own dumb soul for an evil jewel
To the earth-gods, blind and ugly and cruel? . . .

We drank sweet tea as his tale was told,
In a garden of blue chrysanthemums,
While a drowsy swarming of gongs and drums
Out of the sunset dreamily rolled.

But, as the murmur nearer drew,
A fat black bonze, in a robe of blue,

Suddenly at the gate appeared ;
And close behind, with that evil grin,
Was it Creeping Sin, was it Creeping Sin?

The bonze looked quietly down and sneered.
Our guide ! Was he sleeping ? We could not wake him,
However we tried to pinch and shake him !

Nearer, nearer the tumult came,
Till, as a glare of sound and flame,
 Blind from a terrible furnace door
Blares, or the mouth of a dragon, blazed
The seething gateway : deaf and dazed
 With the clanging and the wild uproar
We stood ; while a thousand oval eyes
Gapped our fear with a sick surmise.

Then, as the dead sea parted asunder,
The clamour clove with a sound of thunder

 In two great billows ; and all was quiet.
Gaunt and black was the palankeen
That came in dreadful state between

 The frozen waves of the wild-eyed riot
Curling back from the breathless track
Of the Nameless One who is never seen :

 The close drawn curtains were thick and black ;
But wizen and white was the tall thin man

 As he rose in his sleep :
His eyes were closed, his lips were wan,
 He crouched like a leopard that dares not leap.

The bearers halted : the tall thin man,
Fearfully dreaming, waved his fan,

 With wizard fingers, to and fro ;
While, with a whimper of evil glee,
The Nameless Emperor's mad Moonshee

 Stepped in front of us : dark and slow
Were the words of the doom that he dared not name ;
But, over the ground, as he spoke, there came
Tiny circles of soft blue flame ;

 Like ghosts of flowers they began to glow,
And flow like a moonlit brook between
Our feet and the terrible palankeen.

But the Moonshee wrinkled his long thin eyes,
And sneered, " Have you stolen the strength of the skies ?
 Then pour before us a stream of pearl !

Give us the pearl and the gold we know,
 And our hearts will be softened and let you go ;
 But these are toys for a foolish girl—
 These vanishing blossoms—what are they worth ?
 They are not so heavy as dust and earth :
 Pour before us a stream of pearl ! ”

Then, with a wild strange laugh, our guide
 Stretched his arms to the West and cried
 Once, and a song came over the sea ;
 And all the blossoms of moon-soft fire
 Woke and breathed as a wind-swept lyre,
 And the garden surged into harmony ;
 Till it seemed that the soul of the whole world sung,
 And every petal became a tongue
 To tell the thoughts of Eternity.

But the Moonshee lifted his painted brows
 And stared at the gold on the blue tea-house :
 “ Can you clothe your body with dreams ? ” he sneered ;
 “ If you taught us the truths that we always know
 Our heart might be softened and let you go :
 Can you tell us the length of a monkey’s beard,
 Or the weight of the gems on the Emperor’s fan,
 Or the number of parrots in Old Japan ? ”

And again, with a wild strange laugh, our guide
 Looked at him ; and he shrunk aside,
 Shrivelling like a flame-touched leaf ;
 For the red-cross blossoms of soft blue fire
 Were growing and fluttering higher and higher,
 Shaking their petals out, sheaf by sheaf,
 Till with disks like shields and stems like towers
 Burned the host of the passion-flowers.
 . . . Had the Moonshee flown like a midnight thief ?
 . . . Yet a thing like a monkey, shrivelled and black,
 Chattered and danced as they forced him back.

As the coward chatters for empty pride,
 In the face of a foe that he cannot but fear,
 It chattered and leapt from side to side,
 And its voice rang strangely upon the ear.
 As the cry of a wizard that dares not own
 Another's brighter and mightier throne ;
 As the wrath of a fool that rails aloud
 On the fire that burnt him ; the brazen bray
 Clamoured and sang o'er the gaping crowd,
 And flapped like a gabbling goose away.

THE CRY OF THE MAD MOONSHEE.

*If the blossoms were beans,
 I should know what it means—
 This blaze, which I certainly cannot endure ;
 It is evil, too,
 For its colour is blue,
 And the sense of the matter is quite obscure.
 Celestial truth
 Is the food of youth ;
 But the music was dark as a moonless night.
 The facts in the song
 Were all of them wrong,
 And there was not a single sum done right ;
 Tho' a metaphysician amongst the crowd,
 In a voice that was notably deep and loud,
 Repeated, as fast as he was able,
 The whole of the multiplication table.*

So the cry flapped off as a wild goose flies,
 And the stars came out in the trembling skies,
 And ever the mystic glory grew
 In the garden of blue chrysanthemums,
 Till there came a rumble of distant drums ;
 And the multitude suddenly turned and flew.

. . . A dead ape lay where their feet had been . . .
And we called for the yellow palankeen,
And the flowers divided and let us through.

The black-barred moon was large and low
When we came to the Forest of Ancient Woe ;
And over our heads the stars were bright,
But through the forest the path we travelled
Its phosphorescent aisle unravelled

In one thin ribbon of dwindling light :
And twice and thrice on the fainting track
We paused to listen. The moon grew black,
But the coolies' faces glimmered white,
As the wild woods echoed in dreadful chorus
A laugh that came horribly hopping o'er us
Like monstrous frogs thro' the murky night.

Then the tall thin man as we swung along
Sang us an old enchanted song
That lightened our hearts of their fearful load.
But, e'en as the moonlit air grew sweet,
We heard the pad of stealthy feet
Dogging us down the thin white road ;
And the song grew weary again and harsh,
And the black trees dripped like the fringe of a marsh,
And a laugh crept out like a shadowy toad ;
And we knew it was neither ghoul nor djinn :
It was Creeping Sin ! It was Creeping Sin !

But we came to a bend, and the white moon glowed
Like a gate at the end of the narrowing road
Far away ; and on either hand,
As guards of a path to the heart's desire,
The strange tall blossoms of soft blue fire
Stretched away thro' that unknown land,
League on league with their dwindling lane
Down to the large low moon ; and again
There shimmered around us that mystical strain,
In a tongue that it seemed we could understand.

SONG.

*Hold by right and rule by fear
Till the slowly broadening sphere
Melting through the skies above
Merge into the sphere of love.*

*Hold by might until you find
Might is powerless o'er the mind :
Hold by Truth until you see
Though they bow before the wind,
Its towers can mock at liberty.*

*Time, the seneschal, is blind ;
Time is blind : and what are we ?
Captives of Infinity,
Claiming through Truth's prison bars
Kinship with the wandering stars.*

O, who could tell the wild weird sights
We saw in all the days and nights
We travelled through those forests old.
We saw the griffons on white cliffs,
Among fantastic hieroglyphs,
Guarding enormous heaps of gold :
We saw the Ghastroi—curious men
Who dwell, like tigers, in a den,
And howl whene'er the moon is cold.
They stripe themselves with red and black
And ride upon the yellow Yak.

Their dens are always ankle-deep
With twisted knives, and in their sleep
They often cut themselves. They say
That if you wish to live in peace
The surest way is not to cease
Collecting knives ; and never a day

Can pass, unless they buy a few ;
 And as their enemies buy them too
 They all avert the impending fray,
 And starve their children and their wives
 To buy the necessary knives.

Also we saw the Weirdrians,
 Whose gods are like no god of man's.
 They worship craggy crocodiles
 And bring them children's tongues and fish
 And butter in a lordly dish
 And hymns and charitable smiles ;
 And yet at night one often hears
 The crocodiles all shedding tears.

And once we saw at the dead of night
 The Weirdrians dance in the red fire-light,
 Tossing and waving their scraggy limbs.
 Hither and thither and everywhere
 They gapped the gloom with a green-eyed glare
 And scattered abroad their long wild hair,
 And howled their hideous midnight hymns :
 And the moon grew red as a bleeding wound,
 And the wild beasts wailed as they heard that sound.

HYMN OF THE WEIRDRIANS.

*O, this is the rune of a wonderful world that rolls around
 the sun,
 The most progressive of worlds wherein such rational deeds
 are done !
 O brother, brother, snarl no more, but crunch your bones with
 glee ;
 For there's never a devil in China-town like the devils we
 men can be,
 Hee ! Hee !
 Not a pig-tailed devil in China-town like the devils we men
 can be.*

*If the Wikwaks ever insult our wood, we bribe our boys to go
And knife the boys that the Wikwaks bribe, we Weirdrians,
you know!*

When white-faced women begin to weep, we all sing fiddle-de-dee;

*But there's never a shark in the deepest deep, or an ape on
the tallest tree,*

Hee! Hee!

*Or a pig-tailed devil in China-town like the devils we men
can be.*

At last we saw the plum-trees blow
Round the City, far below;
Faintly in the sunset glow
We saw the soft blue glory flow
O'er many a golden garden gate:
And o'er the tiny dark green seas
Of tamarisks and tulip-trees,
Domes like golden oranges
Dream aloft elate.

And clearer, clearer as we went,
We heard from tower and battlement
A whisper, like a warning, sent
From watchers out of sight;
And clearer, brighter, as we drew
Close to the walls, we saw the blue
Flashing of plumes where peacocks flew
Thro' zones of pearly light.

On either side, a fat black bonze
Guarded the gates of red-wrought bronze,
Blazoned with blue sea-dragons
And mouths of yawning flame;
Down the road of dusty red,
Though their brown feet ached and bled
Our coolies went with joyful tread:
Like living fans the gates outspread
And opened as we came.

PART III.—THE MYSTIC RUBY.

THE white moon dawnded, the sunset died,
And stars were trembling when we spied
 The rose-red temple of our dreams :
Its lamp-lit gardens glimmered cool
With many an onyx-paven pool,
 Amid soft sounds of flowing streams ;
Where star-shine shimmered through the white
Tall fountain-shafts of crystal light
 In ever changing rainbow-gleams.

Priests in flowing yellow robes
Glided under rosy globes.
 Through the green pomegranate boughs
Moonbeams poured their coloured rain.
Roofs of sea-green porcelain
 Jutted o'er the rose-red house.
Bells were hung beneath its eaves ;
Every wind that stirred the leaves
 Tinkled as tired water does.

The temple had a low broad base
Of black bright marble. All its face
 Was marble bright in rosy bloom ;
And where two sea-green pillars rose
Deep in the flower-soft eave-shadows
 We saw, thro' richly sparkling gloom,

Wrought in marvellous years of old
 With bulls and peacocks bossed in gold,
 The doors of powdered lacquer loom.

Quietly then the tall thin man,
 Holding his turquoise-tinted fan,
 Alighted from the palanquin.
 We followed : never painter dreamed
 Of how that dark rich temple gleamed
 With gules of jewelled gloom within ;
 And as we wondered near the door
 A priest came o'er the polished floor
 In sandals of soft serpent-skin.
 His mitre shimmered bright and blue
 With pigeon's breast-plumes. When he knew
 Our quest he stroked his broad white chin,
 And looked at us with slanting eyes
 And smiled ; then through his deep disguise
We knew him ! It was Creeping Sin !

But cunningly he bowed his head
 Down on his gilded breast and said
Come : and he led us through the dusk
 Of passages whose painted walls
 Gleamed with dark old festivals ;
 Till where the gloom grew sweet with musk
 And incense, through a door of amber
 We came into a high-arched chamber.

There on a throne of jasper sat
 A monstrous idol, black and fat.
 Thick rose-oil dropped upon its head :
 Drop by drop, heavy and sweet,
 Trickled down to its ebon feet
 Whereon the blood of goats was shed,
 And smeared around its perfumed knees
 In savage midnight mysteries.

It wore about its bulging waist
A belt of dark green bronze enchased
With big, soft, cloudy pearls. Its wrists
Were clasped about with moony gems
Gathered from dead kings' diadems.
Its throat was ringed with amethysts,
And in its awful hand it held
A softly smouldering emerald.

Silkily murmured Creeping Sin,
"This is the stone you wished to win!"
"White Snake," replied the tall thin man,
"Show us the Ruby Stone, or I
Will slay thee with my hands." The sly
Long eyelids of the priest began
To slant aside; and then once more
He led us through the fragrant door.

And now along the passage walls
Were painted hideous animals,
With hooded eyes and cloven stings:
In the incense that like shadowy hair
Streamed over them they seemed to stir
Their craggy claws and crooked wings.
At last we saw strange moon-wreaths curl
Around a deep, soft porch of pearl.

O, what enchanter wove in dreams
That chapel wild with shadowy gleams
And prismatic colours of the moon?
Shrined like a rainbow in a mist
Of flowers, the fretted amethyst
Arches rose to a mystic tune;
And never mortal art inlaid
Those cloudy floors of sea-soft jade.

There, in the midst, an idol rose
 White as the silent starlit snows
 On lonely Himalayan heights.
 Over its head the spikenard spilled
 Down to its feet, with myrrh distilled
 In distant, odorous Indian nights :
 It held before its ivory face
 A flaming yellow chrysoprase.

O, silkily murmured Creeping Sin,
 "This is the stone you wished to win."
 But in his ear the tall thin man
Whispered with slow, strange lips—we knew
 Not what, but Creeping Sin went blue
 With fear ; again his eyes began
 To slant aside ; then through the porch
 He passed, and lit a tall, brown torch.

Down a corridor dark as death,
 With beating hearts and bated breath
 We hurried. Far away we heard
 A dreadful hissing, fierce as fire
 When rain begins to quench a pyre ;
 And where the smoky torch light flared
 Strange vermin beat their bat-like wings,
 And the wet walls dropped with slimy things.

And darker, darker, wound the way,
 Beyond all gleams of night and day,
 And still that hideous hissing grew
 Louder and louder on our ears,
 And tortured us with eyeless fears ;
 Then suddenly the gloom turned blue,
 And, in the wall, a rough rock cave
 Gaped, like a phosphorescent grave.

And from the purple mist within
There came a wild tumultuous din
 Of snakes that reared their heads and hissed
As if a witch's cauldron boiled.
All round the door great serpents coiled,
 With eyes of glowing amethyst,
Whose fierce blue flames began to slide
Like shooting stars from side to side.

Ah ! with a sickly gasping grin
And quivering eyelids, Creeping Sin
 Stole to the cave ; but, suddenly,
As through its glimmering mouth he passed,
The serpents flashed and gripped him fast.
 He wriggled and gave one awful cry,
Then all at once the cave was cleared.
The snakes with their victim had disappeared.

And fearlessly the tall thin man
Opened his turquoise-tinted fan
 And entered ; and the mists grew bright,
And we saw that the cave was a diamond hall
Lit with lamps for a festival.
 A myriad globes of coloured light
Went gliding deep in its massy sides,
Like the shimmering moons in the glassy tides
 Where a sea-king's palace enchanteth the night.

Gliding and flowing, a glory and wonder,
Through each other, and over, and under,
 The lucent orbs of green and gold,
Bright with sorrow or soft with sleep,
In music through the glimmering deep,
 Over their secret axles rolled,
And circled by the murmuring spheres
We saw in a frame of frozen tears
 A mirror that made the blood run cold.

For, when we came to it, we found
It imaged everything around
Except the face that gazed in it ;
And where the mirrored face should be
A heart-shaped Ruby fierily
Smouldered ; and round the frame was writ,
Mystery : Time and Tide shall pass,
I am the Wisdom Looking-Glass.

This is the Ruby none can touch :
Many have loved it overmuch !
Its fathomless fires flutter and sigh,
Being as images of the flame
That shall make earth and heaven the same
When the fire of the end reddens the sky,
And the world consumes like a burning pall,
Till where there is nothing, there is all.

So we looked up at the tall thin man,
And we saw that his face grew sad and wan :
Tears were glistening in his eyes !
At last, with a breaking sob, he bent
His head upon his breast and went
Swiftly away ! With dreadful cries
We rushed to the softly glimmering door
And stared at the hideous corridor,
But his robe was gone as a dream that flies :
Back to the glass in terror we came,
And stared at the writing round the frame.

We could not understand one word :
And suddenly we thought we heard
The hissing of the snakes again !
How could we front them all alone ?
O, madly we clutched at the mirrored stone
And wished we were back on the flowery plain :
And swifter than thought and swift as fear
The whole world flashed, and behold we were there.

Yes ; there was the port of Old Japan,
With its twisted patterns, white and wan,
Shining like a mottled fan

 Spread by the blue sea, faint and far ;
And far away we heard once more
A sound of singing on the shore,
Where boys in blue kimonos bore

 Roses in a golden jar :
And we heard, where the cherry orchards blow,
The serpent-charmers fluting low,
And the song of the maidens of Miyako.

And at our feet unbroken lay
The glass that had whirled us thither away :

 And in the grass, among the flowers
We sat and wished all sorts of things.
O, we were wealthier than kings !

 We ruled the world for several hours !
And then, it seemed, we knew not why,
All the daisies began to die.

We wished them alive again ; but soon
The trees all fled up tow'rs the moon

 Like peacocks through the sunlit air.
And the butterflies flapped into silver fish,
And each wish spoiled another wish,

 Till we threw the glass down in despair ;
For, getting whatever you want to get,
Is like drinking tea from a fishing-net.

At last we thought we'd wish once more
That all should be as it was before ;

 And then we'd shatter the glass, if we could ;
But just as the world grew right again,
We heard a wanderer out on the plain

 Singing what none of us understood ;
Yet we thought that the world grew thrice more sweet
And the meadows were blossoming under his feet.

And we felt a grand and beautiful fear,
 For we knew that a marvellous thought drew near ;
 So we kept the glass for a little while :
 And the skies grew deeper and twice as bright,
 And the seas grew soft as a flower of light,
 And the meadows rippled from stile to stile ;
 And memories danced in a musical throng
 Thro' the blossom that scented the wonderful song.

SONG.

*We sailed across the silver seas
 And saw the sea-blue bowers,
 We saw the purple cherry trees,
 And all the foreign flowers,
 We travelled in a palanquin
 Beyond the caravan,
 And yet our hearts had never seen
 The Flower of Old Japan.*

*The Flower above all other flowers,
 The Flower that never dies,
 Before whose throne the scented hours
 Offer their sacrifice,
 The Flower that here on earth below
 Reveals the heavenly plan ;
 But only little children know
 The Flower of Old Japan.*

There, in the dim blue flowery plain
 We wished with the magic glass again
 To go to the Flower of the song's desire :
 And o'er us the whole of the soft blue sky
 Flashed like fire as the world went by,
 And far beneath us the sea like fire
 Flashed in one swift blue brilliant stream,
 And the journey was done, like a change in a dream.

PART IV.—THE END OF THE QUEST.

LIKE the dawn upon a dream
Slowly through the scented gloom
Crept once more the ruddy gleam
O'er the friendly nursery room.
There, before our waking eyes,
Large and ghostly, white and dim,
Dreamed the Flower that never dies,
Opening wide its rosy rim.

Spreading like a ghostly fan,
Petals white as porcelain,
There the Flower of Old Japan
Told us we were home again ;
For a soft and curious light
Suddenly was o'er it shed,
And we saw it was a white
English daisy, ringed with red.

Slowly, as a wavering mist
Waned the wonder out of sight,
To a sigh of amethyst,
To a wraith of scented light.
Flower and magic glass had gone.
Near the clutching fire we sat
Dreaming, dreaming, all alone,
Each upon a furry mat.

While the firelight, red and clear,
 Fluttered in the black wet pane,
It was very good to hear
 Howling winds and trotting rain.
For we found at last we knew
 More than all our fancy planned,—
All the fairy tales were true,
 And home the heart of fairyland.

EPILOGUE.

Carol, every violet has
Heaven for a looking-glass !

Every little valley lies
Under many-clouded skies ;
Every little cottage stands
Girt about with boundless lands ;
Every little glimmering pond
Claims the mighty shores beyond
Shores no seaman ever hailed,
Seas no ship has ever sailed.

All the shores when day is done
Fade into the setting sun,
So the story tries to teach
More than can be told in speech.

Beauty is a fading flower,
Truth is but a wizard's tower,
Where a solemn death-bell tolls,
And a forest round it rolls.

We have come by curious ways
To the Light that holds the days
We have sought in haunts of fear
For that all-enfolding sphere,
And lo ! it was not far, but near.

We have found, O foolish-fond,
The shore that has no shore beyond.

Deep in every heart it lies
With its untranscended skies ;
For what heaven should bend above
Hearts that own the heaven of love ?

Carol, Carol, we have come
Back to heaven, back to home.

APES AND IVORY.

APES and ivory, skulls and roses, in junks of old Hong-Kong,
 Gliding over a sea of dreams to a haunted shore of song,
 Masts of gold and sails of satin, shimmering out of the East,
 O, Love has little need of you now to make his heart a feast.

Or is it an elephant, white as milk and bearing a severed head
 That tatters his broad soft wrinkled flank in tawdry patches of red,
 With a negro giant to walk beside and a temple dome above,
 Where ruby and emerald shatter the sun,—is it these that should please my love?

Or is it a palace of pomegranates, where ivory-limbed young slaves
 Lure a luxury out of the noon in the swooning fountain's waves;
 Or couch like cats and sun themselves on the warm white marble brink?
 O, Love has little to ask of these, this day in May, I think.

Is it Lebanon cedars or purple fruits of the honeyed
southron air,
Spikenard, saffron, roses of Sharon, cinnamon, calamus,
myrrh,
A bed of spices, a fountain of waters, or the wild white
wings of a dove,
Now, when the winter is over and gone, is it these that
should please my love?

The leaves outburst on the hazel-bough and the hawthorn's
heaped wi' flower,
And God has bidden the crisp clouds build my love a
lordlier tower,
Taller than Lebanon, whiter than snow, in the fresh blue
skies above ;
And the wild rose wakes in the winding lanes of the
radiant land I love.

Apes and ivory, skulls and roses, in junks of old Hong-Kong,
Gliding over a sea of dreams to a haunted shore of song,
Masts of gold and sails of satin. shimmering out of the East,
O, Love has little need of you now to make his heart a
feast.

SHERWOOD.

SHERWOOD in the twilight, is Robin Hood awake ?
 Grey and ghostly shadows are gliding through the brake,
 Shadows of the dappled deer, dreaming of the morn,
 Dreaming of a shadowy man that winds a shadowy horn.

Robin Hood is here again : all his merry thieves
 Hear a ghostly bugle-note shivering through the leaves,
 Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
 In Sherwood, about the break of day.

Merry, merry England has kissed the lips of June :
 All the wings of fairyland were here beneath the moon,
 Like a flight of rose-leaves fluttering in a mist
 Of opal and ruby and pearl and amethyst.

Merry, merry England is waking as of old,
 With eyes of blither hazel and hair of brighter gold :
 For Robin Hood is here again beneath the bursting spray
 In Sherwood, about the break of day.

Love is in the greenwood building him a house
 Of wild rose and hawthorn and honeysuckle boughs :
 Love is in the greenwood, dawn is in the skies,
 And Marian is waiting with a glory in her eyes.

Hark ! The dazzled laverock climbs the golden steep !
 Marian is waiting : is Robin Hood asleep ?
 Round the fairy grass-rings frolic elf and fay,
 In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Oberon, Oberon, rake away the gold,
Rake away the red leaves, roll away the mould,
Rake away the gold leaves, roll away the red,
And wake Will Scarlett from his leafy forest bed.

Friar Tuck and Little John are riding down together
With quarter-staff and drinking-can and grey goose feather.
The dead are coming back again, the years are rolled away
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Softly over Sherwood the south wind blows.
All the heart of England hid in every rose
Hears across the greenwood the sunny whisper leap,
Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep ?

Hark, the voice of England wakes him as of old
And, shattering the silence with a cry of brighter gold
Bugles in the greenwood echo from the steep,
Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep ?

Where the deer are gliding down the shadowy glen
All across the glades of fern he calls his merry men—
Doublets of the Lincoln green glancing through the May
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day—

Calls them and they answer : from aisles of oak and ash
Rings the *Follow ! Follow !* and the boughs begin to crash,
The ferns begin to flutter and the flowers begin to fly,
And through the crimson dawning the robber band goes by.

Robin ! Robin ! Robin ! All his merry thieves
Answer as the bugle-note shivers through the leaves,
Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

THE WORLD'S MAY-QUEEN.

I.

WHITHER away is the Spring to-day?
 To England, to England!
 In France they heard the South wind say,
 "She's off on a quest for a Queen o' the May,
 So she's over the hills and far away,
 To England!"

And why did she fly with her golden feet
 To England, to England?
 In Italy, too, they heard the sweet
 Roses whisper and flutter and beat—
 "She's an old and a true true love to greet
 In England!"

A moon ago there came a cry
 From England, from England,
 Faintly, fondly it faltered nigh
 The throne of the Spring in the Southern sky,
 And it whispered "Come," and the world went by,
 And with one long loving blissful sigh
 The Spring was away to England!

II.

When Spring comes back to England
 And crowns her brows with May,
 Round the merry moonlit world
 She goes the greenwood way :
 She throws a rose to Italy,
 A fleur-de-lys to France ;
 But round her regal morris-ring
 The seas of England dance.

When Spring comes back to England
 And dons her robe of green,
 There's many a nation garlanded
 But England is the Queen ;
 She's Queen, she's Queen of all the world
 Beneath the laughing sky,
 For the nations go a-Maying
 When they hear the New Year cry --

"Come over the water to England,
 My old love, my new love,
 Come over the water to England,
 In showers of flowery rain ;
 Come over the water to England,
 April, my true love ;
 And tell the heart of England
 The Spring is here again ! "

III.

So it's here, she is here with her eyes of blue
 In England, in England !
 With a glory of shimmering glimmering dew
 And a heaven of quivering scent and hue
 And a lily for me and a rose for you
 In England.

'There's many a wanderer far away
 From England, from England,
 Will toss upon his couch and say—
 Though Spain is proud and France is gay,
 And there's many a foot on the primrose way,
 The world has never a Queen o' the May
 But England.

IV.

When Drake went out to seek for gold
 Across the uncharted sea,
 And saw the Western skies unfold
 Their veils of mystery ;
 To lure him through the fevered hours
 As nigh to death he lay,
 There floated o'er the foreign flowers
 A breath of English May :

And back to Devon shores again
 His dreaming spirit flew
 Over the splendid Spanish Main
 To haunts his childhood knew,
 Whispering "God forgive the blind
 Desire that bade me roam,
 I've sailed around the world to find
 The sweetest way to home."

V.

And it's whither away is the Spring to-day ?
 To England, to England !
 In France you'll hear the South wind say,
 "She off on a quest for a Queen o' the May,
 So she's over the hills and far away,
 To England ! "

She's flown with the swallows across the sea
To England, to England !
For there's many a land of the brave and free
But never a home o' the hawthorn-tree,
And never a Queen o' the May for me
But England !

She is here, she is here with her eyes of blue,
In England, in England !
She has brought us the rainbows with her, too,
And a heaven of quivering scent and hue,
And a glory of shimmering glimmering dew,
And a lily for me and a rose for you,
To England.

And round the fairy revels whirl
In England, in England !
And the buds outbreak and the leaves unfurl,
And where the crisp white cloudlets curl
The Dawn comes up like a primrose girl
With a crowd of flowers in a basket of pearl
For England !

PIRATES.

COME to me, you with the laugning face, in the night
as I lie

Dreaming of days that are dead and of joys gone by ;
Come to me, comrade, come through the slow-dropping rain,
Come from your grave in the darkness and let us be
playmates again.

Let us be boys together to-night, and pretend as of old
We are pirates at rest in a cave among huge heaps of gold,
Red Spanish doubloons and great pieces of eight, and
muskets and swords,
And a smoky red camp-fire to glint, you know how, on
our ill-gotten hoards.

The old cave in the fir-wood that slopes down the hills
to the sea

Still is haunted, perhaps, by young pirates as wicked as we :
Though the fir with the magpie's big mud-plastered nest
used to hide it so well,
And the boys in the gang had to swear that they never
would tell.

Ah, that tree ; I have sat in its boughs and looked sea-
ward for hours.

I remember the creak of its branches, the scent of the
flowers

That climbed round the mouth of the cave : it is odd I recall
Those little things best, that I scarcely took heed of at all.

I remember how brightly the brass on the butt of my
spy-glass gleamed
As I climbed through the purple heather and thyme to
our eyrie and dreamed;
I remember the smooth glossy sun-burn that darkened our
faces and hands
As we gazed at the merchantmen sailing away to those
wonderful lands.

I remember the long long sigh of the sea as we raced
in the sun,
To dry ourselves after our swimming; and how we would run
With a cry and a crash through the foam as it creamed
on the shore,
Then back to bask in the warm dry gold of the sand
once more.

Come to me, you with the laughing face, in the gloom
as I lie
Dreaming of days that are dead and of joys gone by;
Let us be boys together to-night and pretend as of old
We are pirates at rest in a cave among great heaps of gold.

Come; you shall be chief. We'll not quarrel, the time
flies so fast.
There are ships to be grappled, there's blood to be shed,
ere our playtime be past.
No; perhaps we *will* quarrel, just once, or it scarcely
will seem
So like the old days that have flown from us both like
a dream.

Still; you shall be chief in the end; and then we'll go home
To the hearth and the tea and the books that we loved:
ah, but come,
Come to me, come through the night and the slow-dropping
rain;
Come, old friend, come thro' the darkness and let us be
playmates again.

A SONG OF ENGLAND.

THERE is a song of England that none shall ever sing ;
 So sweet it is and fleet it is
 That none whose words are not as fleet as birds upon
 the wing,
 And regal as her mountains,
 And radiant as the fountains
 Of rainbow-coloured sea-spray that every wave can fling
 Against the cliffs of England, the sturdy cliffs of England,
 Could more than seem to dream of it,
 Or catch one flying gleam of it,
 Above the seas of England that never cease to sing.

There is a song of England that only lovers know ;
 So rare it is and fair it is,
 O, like a fairy rose it is upon a drift of snow,
 So cold and sweet and sunny,
 So full of hidden honey,
 So like a flight of butterflies where rose and lily blow
 Along the lanes of England, the leafy lanes of England ;
 When flowers are at their vespers
 And full of little whispers,
 The boys and girls of England shall sing it as they go.

There is a song of England that only love may sing,
 So sure it is and pure it is ;
 And seaward with the sea-mew it spreads a whiter wing,
 And with the sky-lark hovers
 Above the tryst of lovers,

Above the kiss and whisper that led the lovely Spring
Through all the glades of England, the ferny glades of
England,

Until the way enwound her
With sprays of May, and crowned her
With stars of frosty blossom in a merry morris-ring.

There is a song of England that haunts her hours of rest :

The calm of it and balm of it
Are breathed from every hedgerow that blushes to the
West :

From the cottage doors that nightly
Cast their welcome out so brightly
On the lanes where laughing children are lifted and
caressed
By the tenderest hands in England, hard and blistered
hands of England :
And from the restful sighing
Of the sleepers that are lying
With the arms of God around them on the night's con-
tent breast.

There is a song of England that wanders on the wind ;

So sad it is and glad it is
That men who hear it madden and their eyes are wet and
blind,

For the lowlands and the highlands
Of the unforgotten islands,
For the Islands of the Blessed and the rest they cannot
find

As they grope in dreams to England and the love they
left in England ;
Little feet that danced to meet them
And the lips that used to greet them,
And the watcher at the window in the home they left
behind.

There is a song of England that thrills the beating blood
With burning cries and yearning
Tides of hidden aspiration hardly known or understood ;
Aspirations of the creature
Tow'rd the unity of Nature ;
Sudden chivalries revealing whence the longing is renewed
In the men that live for England, live and love and die
for England :
By the light of their desire
They shall blindly blunder higher,
To a wider, grander Kingdom and a deeper, nobler Good.

There is a song of England that only heaven can hear ;
So gloriously victorious,
It soars above the choral stars that sing the Golden Year ;
Till even the cloudy shadows
That wander o'er her meadows
In silent purple harmonies declare His glory there,
Along the hills of England, the billowy hills of England ;
While heaven rolls and ranges
Through all the myriad changes
That mirror God in music to the mortal eye and ear.

There is a song of England that none shall ever sing ;
So sweet it is and fleet it is
That none whose words are not as fleet as birds upon the
wing,
And regal as her mountains,
And radiant as her fountains
Of rainbow-coloured sea-spray that every wave can fling
Against the cliffs of England, the sturdy cliffs of England,
Could more than seem to dream of it,
Or catch one flying gleam of it,
Above the seas of England that never cease to sing.

THE PHANTOM FLEET.

THE sunset lingered in the pale green West :
 In rosy wastes the low soft evening star
 Woke ; while the last white sea-mew sought for rest ;
 And tawny sails came stealing o'er the bar.

But, in the hillside cottage, through the panes
 The light streamed like a thin far trumpet-call,
 And quickened, as with quivering battle-stains,
 The printed ships that decked the parlour wall.

From oaken frames old admirals looked down :
 They saw the lonely slumberer at their feet :
 They saw the paper, headed *Talk from Town* ;
Our rusting trident, and our phantom fleet :

And from a neighbouring tavern surged a song
 Of England laughing in the face of war,
 With eyes unconquerably proud and strong,
 And lips triumphant from her Trafalgar.

But he, the slumberer in that glimmering room,
 Saw distant waters glide and heave and gleam ;
 Around him in the softly coloured gloom
 The pictures clustered slowly to a dream.

He saw how England resting on her past,
 Among the faded garlands of her dead,
 Woke ; for a whisper reached her heart at last,
 And once again she raised her steel-clad head.

Her eyes were filled with sudden strange alarms ;
 She heard the westering waters change and chime ;
 She heard the distant tumult of her arms
 Defeated, not by courage, but by Time.

Knowledge had made a deadlier pact with death,
 Nor strength nor steel availed against that bond :
 Slowly approached—and Britain held her breath—
 The battle booming from the deeps beyond.

Then, then what anguish rose upon the wind,
 And hung, tortured, between the sea and sky,
 Where all her navies, baffled, broken, blind,
 Slunk backward, snarling in their agony !
Who guards the gates of Britain now ? The cry
 Stabbed heaven ! *England, the shattered ramparts fall !*
 And suddenly an answer pealed on high,
 Far off—*We hear ! We hasten !* Through the pall
 Of cannon-smoke that voice burst like a trumpet-call.

Then came a distant sound of breaking waves
 Rolling out of the sunset-coloured gloom ;
 A multitudinous rumour of rending graves,
 And generations rising from their tomb,
 With sound imperious as the dawn of doom
 Till e'en the conqueror paused upon his way.
 From coast to coast the cannon ceased to boom ;
 And the torn fleets weltering together lay,
 Listening with such prayers as words can never pray.

We come to fight for England ! The great East
 Heard, and was rent asunder as a veil.
 Host upon host out of the night increased
 Its towering clouds and crowded zones of sail :
England, our England, canst thou faint or fail ?
We come to fight for England yet once more !
 This, this is ours at least ! Count the great tale
 Of all these dead that rise to guard thy shore
 By right of the red life they never feared to pour.

We come to fight for England! On they came,
One cloud of conquest sweeping down to lee ;
And there, through all their thousands, flashed like flame
The deathless signal of the Victory :
And there was Nelson, watching silently
His great ship rush before the stormy van,
And still his timeless watchword ruled the sea :
England expects this day that every man
Will do his duty : and still in front the Victory ran.

Nelson, our Nelson, frail and maimed and blind,
Stretched out his dead cold face against the foe :
And England's Raleigh followed hard behind,
With all his eager fighting heart aglow ;
Glad, glad for England's sake once more to know
The old joy of battle and contempt of pain ;
Glad, glad to die, if England willed it so,
The traitor's and the coward's death again ;
But hurl the world back now as once he hurled back Spain.

And there were all those others, Drake and Blake,
Rodney and Howard, Byron, Collingwood ;
With deathless eyes aflame for England's sake,
As on their ancient decks they proudly stood,—
Decks washed of old with England's purplest blood ;
And there, once more, each rushing oaken side
Bared its dark-throated, thirsty, gleaming brood
Of cannon, watched by laughing lads who died
Long, long ago for England and her ancient pride.

We come to fight for England! The great sea
Before the rushing bows began to break
In roaring cataracts, as the Victory
Drew them in her inviolable wake :
With all their gleaming guns in deadly rake
And silent menace, tow'rds the foe they passed,
Crying, O England, England, for our sake
Whose guns are dumb for ever, now at last
Behold us die once more, then let the past be past.

We come to die for England: through the hush
 Of gathered nations rose that regal cry,
 From naked oaken walls one word could crush
 If those vast armoured throats dared to reply :
 But there the most implacable enemy
 Felt his eyes fill with gladder, prouder tears,
 As Nelson's calm eternal face went by,
 Gazing beyond all perishable fears
 To some imperial end above the waste of years.

Through the deep hush the vision streamed away
 Silently towards the smouldering crimson West,
 And a strange peace covered the fleets that lay
 Heaving upon the breathless ocean's breast.

Far, far away, the yearning voiceless nations
 Saw the great Light that brings the end of wars
 Guiding the dead and deathless generations,
 Till love and awe and wonder brought the stars :

But ere the last faint colour ebbed in heaven
 That ancient host returned to rest at last ;
 And voices cried across the empurpled even,
Reign, England, reign, and let the past be past.

Thy heritage is rich ; and it is thine
By right of toil on every land and sea ;
And by that crimson sacrificial wine
Of thine own heart and thine own agony.

Thy heritage is rich ; but every hour
Demands the present labour : this alone
Preserves to thee that regal right and power
Whereof the past is but the cushioned throne.

Look to the fleet ! Again and yet again
Hear us who storm thy heart with this one cry ;
Hear us who cannot help, though fain and fain
To hold the breach before thee and to die.

Look to the fleet ! thy fleet ! the first, last line.

*Britain, it is thy sword, thy strength, thy shield,
Thy food, thy life-blood ! Britain, it is thine
Now, now, to hold the birthright or to yield.*

Then, all night long, the imperious days of old

Swept back through misty zones of blood and tears,
And cloudy visions towards the darkness rolled
The sad returning pageant of the years.

Slowly, o'er tides where toil and tumult cease,
Through shadowy gulfs the Victory returned,
To harbour on the shores of perfect peace,
And from her mast no battle-message burned :

And, following her, there drew through phantom skies
The faded Temeraire with misty spars,
The black blur of the coughing tug, and cries
Of seamen looking eastward towards the stars.

Then host on host, from heaven's remotest bound,
In silence drew their zone of mystic light,
Each with a sovran stillness haloed round,
Majestically moving towards the night.

THE OLD SCEPTIC.

I AM weary of disbelieving : why should I wound my
love

To pleasure a sophist's pride in a graven image of
truth ?

I will go back to my home, with the clouds and the stars
above,

And the heaven I used to know, and the God of my
buried youth.

I will go back to the home where of old in my boyish
pride

I pierced my father's heart with a murmur of disbelief.
He only looked in my face as I spoke, but his mute eyes
cried

Night after night in my dreams ; and he died in grief,
in grief.

Books ? I have read the books, the books that we write
ourselves,

Extolling our love of an abstract truth and our pride of
debate :

I will go back to the love of the cotter who sings as he
delves,

To that childish infinite love and the God above fact
and date.

To that ignorant infinite God who colours the meaningless flowers,
 To that lawless infinite Poet who crowns the law with the crime ;
 To the Weaver who covers the world with a garment of wonderful hours,
 And holds in His hand like threads the tales and the truths of time.

Is the faith of the cotter so simple and narrow as this ?
 Ah, well,
 It is hardly so narrow as yours who daub and plaster with dyes
 The shining mirrors of heaven, the shadowy mirrors of hell,
 And blot out the dark deep vision, if it seem to be framed with lies.

No faith I hurl against you, no fact to freeze your sneers.
 Only the doubt you taught me to weld in the fires of youth
 Leaps to my hand like the flaming sword of nineteen hundred years,
 The sword of the high God's answer, *O Pilate, what is truth ?*

Your laughter has killed more hearts than ever were pierced with swords,
 Ever you daub new mirrors and turn the old to the wall ;
 And more than blood is lost in the weary battle of words ;
 For creeds are many ; but God is One, and contains them all.

Ah, why should we strive or cry ? Surely the end is close !
 Hold by your little truths : deem your triumph complete !
 But nothing is true or false in the infinite heart of the rose ;
 And the earth is a little dust that clings to our travelling feet.

I will go back to my home and look at the wayside flowers,
And hear from the wayside cabins the kind old hymns
again,
Where Christ holds out His arms in the quiet evening
hours,
And the light of the chapel porches broods on the
peaceful lane.

And there I shall hear men praying the deep old foolish
prayers,
And there I shall see, once more, the fond old faith
confessed,
And the strange old light on their faces who hear as a
blind man hears,—
Come unto Me, ye weary, and I will give you rest.

I will go back and believe in the deep old foolish tales,
And pray the simple prayers that I learned at my
mother's knee,
Where the Sabbath tolls its peace thro' the breathless
mountain-vales,
And the sunset's evening hymn hallows the listening
sea.

THE DEATH OF CHOPIN.

SING to me ! Ah, remember how
 Poor Heine here in Paris leant
 Watching me play at the fall of day
 And following where the music went,
 Till that old cloud upon his brow
 Was almost smoothed away.

“ Do roses in the moonlight flame
 Like this and this ? ” he said and smiled ;
 Then bent his head as o’er his dead
 Brother might breathe some little child
 The accustomed old half-jesting name,
 With all its mockery fled,

Like summer lightnings, far away,
 In heaven. O, what Bohemian nights
 We passed down there for that brief year
 When art revealed her last delights ;
 And then, that night, that night in May
 When Hugo came to hear !

“ Do roses in the moonlight glow
 Like this and this ? ” I could not see
 His eyes, and yet—they were quite wet,
 Blinded, I think ! What should I be
 If in that hour I did not know
 My own diviner debt ?

For God has made this world of ours
Out of His own exceeding pain,
As here in art man's bleeding heart
Slow drop by drop completes the strain ;
And dreams of death make sweet the flowers
Where lovers meet to part.

Recall, recall my little room
Where all the masters came that night,
Came just to hear me, Meyerbeer,
Lamartine, Balzac ; and no light
But my two candles in the gloom ;
Though she, she too was there,

George Sand. This music once unlocked
My heart, she took the gold she prized :
Her novel gleams no richer : dreams
Like mine are best unanalysed :
And she forgets her poor bemocked
Prince Karol, now, it seems.

I was Prince Karol ; yes, and Liszt
Count Salvator Albani : she
My Floriani—all so far
Away !—My dreams are like the sea
That round Majorca sighed and kissed
Each softly mirrored star.

O, what a golden round of hours
Our island villa knew : we two
Alone with sky and sea, the sigh
Of waves, the warm unfathomed blue ;
With what a chain of nights like flowers
We bound Love, she and I.

What music, what harmonious
 Glad triumphs of the world's desire
 Where passion yearns to God and burns
 Earth's dross out with its own pure fire,
 Or tolls like some deep angelus
 Through Death's divine nocturnes.

"Do roses in the moonlight glow
 Like this and this?" What did she think
 Of him whose hands at Love's command
 Made Life as honey o'er the brink
 Of Death drip slow, darkling and slow?
 Ah, did she understand?

She studied every sob she heard,
 She watched each dying hope she found;
 And yet she understood not one
 Poor sorrow there that like a wound
 Gaped, bleeding, pleading—for one word—
 No? And the dream was done.

For her—I am "wrapped in incense gloom,
 In drifting clouds and golden light;"
 Once I was shod with fire and trod
 Beethoven's path through storm and night:
 It is too late now to resume
 My monologue with God.

Well, my lost love, you were so kind
 In those old days: ah yes; you came
 When I was ill! In dreams you still
 Will come? (Do roses always flame
 By moonlight, thus?) I, too, grow blind
 With wondering if she will.

Yet, Floriani, what am I
To you, though love was life to me ?
My life consumed like some perfumed
Pale altar-flame beside the sea :
You stood and smiled and watched it die !
You, you whom it illumed,

Could you not feed it with your love ?
Am I not starving here and now ?
Sing, sing ! I'd miss no smile or kiss—
No roses in Majorca glow
Like this and this—so death may prove
Best—ah, how sweet life is !

SONG.

(AFTER THE FRENCH OF ROSTAND.)

O, MANY a lover sighs
Beneath the summer skies
For black or hazel eyes
All day.

No light of hope can mar
My whiter brighter star ;
I love a Princess far
Away.

Now you that haste to meet
Your love's returning feet
Must plead for every sweet
Caress ;
But, day and night and day,
Without a prayer to pray,
I love my far away
Princess.

BUTTERFLIES.

ONCE, when Yrma watched the rain
 Beat the pane,
 Saw the garden of her dreams
 Where the clove carnation grows
 And the rose
 Veiled with shimmering shades and gleams,

Mirrored colours, mystic gleams,
 Fairy dreams,
 Drifting in her radiant eyes
 Half in earnest asked, that day,
 Half in play,
 Where were all the butterflies ?

Where were all the butterflies
 When the skies
 Clouded and their bowers of clover
 Bowed beneath the golden shower ?
 Every flower
 Shook and the rose was brimming over.

Ah, the dog-rose trembling over
 Thyme and clover,
 How it glitters in the sun,
 Now the hare-bells lift again
 Bright with rain
 After all the showers are done !

Ah, when all the showers are done,
 How the sun
Softly smiling o'er the scene
 Bids the white wings come and go
 To and fro
Through the maze of gold and green.

Magic webs of gold and green
 Rainbow sheen
Mesh the maze of flower and fern,
 Cuckoo-grass and meadow-sweet,
 And the wheat
Where the crimson poppies burn.

Ay ; and where the poppies burn,
 They return
All across the dreamy downs,
 Little wings that flutter and beat
 O'er the sweet
Bluffs the purple clover crowns.

Where the fairy clover crowns
 Dreamy downs,
And amidst the golden grass
 Buttercups and daisies blow
 To and fro
When the shadowy billows pass ;

Time has watched them pause and pass
 Where Love was ;
Ah, what fairy butterflies,
 Little wild incarnate blisses,
 Coloured kisses,
Floating under azure skies !

Under those eternal skies
 See, they rise :
Mottled wings of moony sheen,
 Wings in whitest star-shine dipped,
 Orange tipped,
Eyed with black and veined with green.

They were fairies plumed with green
 Rainbow-sheen
Ere Time bade their host begone
 From that palace built of roses
 Which still dozes
In the greenwood all alone.

In the greenwood all alone
 And unknown :
Now they roam these mortal dells
 Wondering where that happy glade is,
 Painted Ladies,
Admirals, and Tortoise-shells.

O, Fritillaries, Admirals,
 Tortoise-shells ;
You, like fragments of the skies
 Fringed with Autumn's richest hues,
 Dainty blues
Patterned with mosaic dyes ;

Oh, and you whose peacock dyes
 Gleam with eyes ;
You, whose wings of burnished copper
 Burn upon the sunburnt brae
 Where all day
Whirrs the hot and grey grasshopper ;

While the grey grasshopper whirrs
 In the furze,
You that with your sulphur wings
 Melt into the gold perfume
 Of the broom
Where the linnet sits and sings ;

You that, as a poet sings,
 On your wings
Image forth the dreams of earth,
 Quicken them in form and hue
 To the new
Glory of a brighter birth ;

You that bring to a brighter birth
 Dust and earth
Rapt to glory on your wings,
 All transfigured in the white
 Living light
Shed from out the soul of things ;

Heralds of the soul of things,
 You whose wings
Carry heaven through every glade ;
 Thus transfigured from the petals
 Death unsettles,
Little souls of leaf and blade ;

You that mimic bud and blade,
 Light and shade ;
Tinted souls of leaf and stone,
 Flower and sunny bank of sand,
 Fairyland
Calls her children to their own ;

Calls them back into their own
Great unknown ;
Where the harmonies they cull
On their wings are made complete
As they beat
Through the Gate called Beautiful.

SONG OF THE WOODEN-LEGGED
FIDDLER.

(PORTSMOUTH 1805.)

I LIVED in a cottage adown in the West
 When I was a boy, a boy ;
 But I knew no peace and I took no rest
 Though the roses nigh smothered my snug little nest ;
 For the smell of the sea
 Was much rarer to me,
 And the life of a sailor was all my joy.

CHORUS.—*The life of a sailor was all my joy !*

My mother she wept, and she begged me to stay
 Anchored for life to her apron-string,
 And soon she would want me to help wi' the hay ;
 So I bided her time, then I flitted away
 On a night of delight in the following spring,
 With a pair of stout shoon
 And a seafaring tune
 And a bundle and stick in the light of the moon,
 Down the long road
 To Portsmouth I strode,
 To fight like a sailor for country and king.

CHORUS.—*To fight like a sailor for country and king.*

And now that my feet are turned homeward again
 My heart is still crying Ahoy ! Ahoy !
 And my thoughts are still out on the Spanish main
 A-chasing the frigates of France and Spain,
 For at heart an old sailor is always a boy ;
 And his nose will still itch
 For the powder and pitch
 Till the days when he can't tell t'other from which,
 Nor a grin o' the guns from a glint o' the sea,
 Nor a skipper like Nelson from lubbers like me.

CHORUS.—*Nor a skipper like Nelson from lubbers like me.*

Ay ! Now that I'm old I'm as bold as the best,
 And the life of a sailor is all my joy ;
 Though I've swapped my leg
 For a wooden peg
 And my head is as bald as a new-laid egg,
 The smell of the sea
 Is like victuals to me,
 And I think in the grave I'll be crying Ahoy !
 For, though my old carcass is ready to rest,
 At heart an old sailor is always a boy.

CHORUS.—*At heart an old sailor is always a boy.*

THE FISHER-GIRL.

WHERE the old grey churchyard slopes to the sea,
 On the sunny side of a mossed headstone ;
 Watching the wild white butterflies pass
 Through the fairy forests of grass,
 Two little children with brown legs bare
 Were merrily merrily
 Weaving a wonderful daisy-chain,
 And chanting the rhyme that was graven there
 Over and over and over again ;
 While the warm wind came and played with their hair
 And laughed and was gone
 Out, far out to the foam-flowered lea
 Like an ocean-wandering memory.

*Eighteen hundred and forty-three,
 Dan Trevennick was lost at sea :
 And, buried here at her husband's side
 Lies the body of Joan, his bride,
 Who, a little while after she lost him, died.*

This was the rhyme that was graven there,
 And the children chanted it quietly ;
 As the warm wind came and played with their hair,
 And rustled the golden grasses against the stone,
 And laughed and was gone

To waken the wild white flowers of the sea,
And sing a song of the days that were,
A song of memory, gay and blind
As the sun on the graves that it left behind ;
For this, ah this, was the song of the wind.

I.

She sat on the tarred old jetty, with a sailor's careless ease,
And the clear waves danced around her feet and kissed her
tawny knees ;
Her head was bare, and her thick black hair was coiled
behind a throat
Chiselled as hard and bright and bold as the bow of a
sailing boat.

II.

Her eyes were blue, and her jersey was blue as the lapping,
slapping seas,
And the rose in her cheek was painted red by the brisk
Atlantic breeze ;
And she sat and waited her father's craft, while Dan
Trevennick's eyes
Were sheepishly watching her sunlit smiles and her soft
contented sighs.

III.

For he thought he would give up his good black pipe and
his evening glasses of beer,
And blunder to chapel on Sundays again for a holy
Christian year,
To hold that foot in his hard rough hand and kiss the
least of its toes :
Then he swore at himself for a great damned fool ; which
he probably was, God knows.

IV.

Often in summer twilights, too, he would sit on a coil of
rope,
As the stars came out in their twinkling crowds to play
with wonder and hope,
While he watched the side of her clear-cut face as she sat
on the jetty and fished,
And even to help her coil her line was more than he hoped
or wished.

V.

But once or twice o'er the dark green tide he saw with a
solemn delight,
Hooked and splashing after her line, a flash and a streak
of white ;
As hand over hand she hauled it up, a great black conger
eel,
For Dan Trevennick to kill as it squirmed with its head
beneath his heel.

VI.

And at last, with a crash and a sunset cry from the low
soft evening star,
A shadowy schooner suddenly loomed o'er the dark green
oily bar ;
With fairy-like spars and misty masts in the golden dusk of
gloaming,
Where the last white seamew's wide-spread wings were
wistfully westward roaming ;

VII.

Then the song of the foreign seamen rose in the magical evening air,
Faint and far away as it seemed, but they knew it was, ah, so near ;
Far away as her heart from Dan's as he sheepishly drew to her side,
And near as her heart when he kissed the lips of his newly promised bride.

VIII.

And when they were riding away in the train on the night of their honeymoon,
What a whisper tingled against her cheek as it blushed like a rose in June ;
For she said, "I am tired and ready for bed," and Dan said, "So am I ;"
And she murmured, "Are you tired, too, poor Dan ?" and he answered her, "No, dear, why ?"

IX.

It was never a problem-play, at least, and the end of it all is this ;
They were drowned in the bliss of their ignorance and buried the rest in a kiss ;
And they loved one another their whole life long, as lovers will often do ;
For it never was only the fairy-tales that rang so royally true.

X.

*The rose in her cheek was painted red by the brisk Atlantic
breeze ;
Her eyes were blue, and her jersey was blue as the lapping,
slapping seas ;
Her head was bare, and her thick black hair was coiled
behind a throat
Chiselled as hard and bright and bold as the bow of a
sailing boat.*

XI.

*Eighteen hundred and forty-three,
Dan Trevennick was lost at sea :
And, buried here at her husband's side
Lies the body of Joan, his bride,
Who, a little while after she lost him, died.*

A SONG OF TWO BURDENS.

THE round brown sails were reefed and struggling home
 Over the glitter and gloom of the angry deep :
 Dark in the cottage she sang, " Soon, soon, he will come,
 Dreamikin, Drowsy-head, sleep, my little one, sleep."

Over the glitter and gloom of the angry deep
 Was it only a dream or a shadow that vanished away ?
 " Lullaby, little one, sleep, my little one, sleep,"
 She sang in a dream as the shadows covered the day.

Was it only a sail or a shadow that vanished away ?
 The boats come home : there is one that will never
 return ;
 But she sang in a dream as the shadows buried the day ;
 And she set the supper and begged the fire to burn.

The boats come home ; but one will never return ;
 And a strangled cry went up from the struggling sea ;
 She sank on her knees and begged the fire to burn,
 " Burn, oh burn, for my love is coming to me ! "

A strangled cry went up from the struggling sea,
 A cry where the ghastly surf to the moon-dawn rolled ;
 Burn, oh burn ; for my love is coming to me,
 His hands will be scarred with the ropes and starved
 with the cold.

A strangled cry where the foam in the moonlight rolled,
A bitter cry from the heart of the ghastly sea ;
His hands will be frozen, the night is dark and cold,
Burn, oh burn, for my love is coming to me.

One cry to God from the soul of the shuddering sea,
One moment of stifling lips and struggling hands ;
Burn, oh burn ; for my love is coming to me ;
And oh, I think the little one understands.

One moment of stifling lips and struggling hands,
Then only the glitter and gloom of the angry deep ;
And oh, I think the little one understands ;
Dreamikin, Drowsy-head, sleep, my little one, sleep.

EARTH-BOUND.

GHOSTS? Love would fain believe,
 Earth being so fair, the dead might wish to return!
 Is it so strange if, even in heaven, they yearn
 For the May-time and the dreams it used to give?

Through dark abyssms of Space,
 From strange new spheres where Death has called them
 now
 May they not, with a crown on every brow,
 Still cry to the loved earth's lost familiar face?

We two, love, we should come
 Seeking a little refuge from the light
 Of the blinding terrible star-sown Infinite,
 Seeking some sheltering roof, some four-walled home,

From that too high, too wide
 Communion with the universe and God,
 How glad to creep back to some lane we trod
 Hemmed in with a hawthorn hedge on either side.

Fresh from death's boundless birth,
 How fond the circled vision of the sea
 Would seem to souls tired of Infinity,
 How kind the soft blue boundaries of earth,

How rich the nodding spray
 Of pale green leaves that made the sapphire deep
 A background to the dreams of that brief sleep
 We called our life when heaven was far away.

How strange would be the sight
 Of the little towns and twisted streets again,
 Where all the hurrying works and ways of men
 Would seem a children's game for our delight.

What boundless heaven could give
 This joy in the strait austere restraints of earth,
 Whereof the dead have felt the immortal dearth
 Who look upon God's face and cannot live?

Our ghosts would clutch at flowers
 As drowning men at straws, for fear the sea
 Should sweep them back to God's Eternity,
 Still clinging to the day that once was ours.

No more with fevered brain
 Plunging across the gulfs of Space and Time
 Would we revisit this our earthly clime
 We two, if we could ever come again;

Not as we came of old,
 But reverencing the flesh we now despise
 And gazing out with consecrated eyes,
 Each of us glad of the other's hand to hold.

So we should wander nigh
 Our mortal home, and see its little roof
 Keeping the deep eternal night aloof
 And yielding us a refuge from the sky.

We should steal in, once more,
Under the cloudy lilac at the gate,
Up the walled garden, then with hearts elate
Forget the stars and close our cottage door.

Oh then, as children use
To make themselves a little hiding-place,
We would rejoice in narrowness of space,
And God should give us nothing more to lose.

How good it all would seem
To souls that from the æonian ebb and flow
Came down to hear once more the to and fro
Swing o' the clock dictate its hourly theme.

How dear the strange recall
From vast antiphonies of joy and pain
Beyond the grave, to these old books again,
That cosy lamp, those pictures on the wall.

Home ! Home ! The old desire !
We would shut out the innumerable skies,
Draw close the curtains, then with patient eyes
Bend o'er the hearth ; laugh at our memories,
Or watch them crumbling in the crimson fire.

ART, THE HERALD.

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness."

I.

Beyond ; beyond ; and yet again beyond !
 What went ye out to seek, oh foolish-fond ?
 Is not the heart of all things here and now ?
 Is not the circle infinite, and the centre
 Everywhere, if ye would but hear and enter ?
 Come ; the porch bends and the great pillars bow.

II.

Come ; come and see the secret of the sun ;
 The sorrow that holds the warring worlds in one ;
 The pain that holds Eternity in an hour ;
 One God in every seed self-sacrificed,
 One star-eyed, star-crowned universal Christ,
 Re-crucified in every wayside flower.

THE OPTIMIST.

TEACH me to live and to forgive
 The death that all must die
 Who pass in slumber through this heaven
 Of earth and sea and sky ;

Who live by grace of Time and Space
 At which their peace is priced ;
 And cast their lots upon the robe
 That wraps the cosmic Christ ;

Who cannot see the world-wide Tree
 Where Love lies bleeding still ;
 This universal cross of God
 Our star-crowned Igdrasil.

Teach me to live ; I do not ask
 For length of earthly days,
 Or that my heaven-appointed task
 Should fall in pleasant ways ;

If in this hour of warmth and light
 The last great knell were knolled ;
 If Death should close mine eyes to-night
 And all the tale be told ;

While I have lips to speak or sing
And power to draw this breath,
Shall I not praise my Lord and King
Above all else, for death?

Not for the blindness and the sleep
In which the world goes by;
But for the wakening to the deep
Dawn of Eternity.

When on a golden eve he drove
His keenest sorrow deep
Deep in my heart, and called it love;
I did not wince or weep.

A wild Hosanna shook the world
And wakened all the sky,
As through a white and burning light
Her passionate face went by.

When on a golden dawn he called
My best beloved away,
I did not shrink or stand appalled
Before the hopeless day.

The joy of that triumphant dearth
And anguish cannot die;
The joy that casts aside this earth
For immortality.

I would not change one word of doom
Upon the dreadful scroll,
That gave her body to the tomb
And freed her fettered soul.

For now each idle breeze can bring
The kiss I never seek ;
The nightingale has heard her sing,
The rose caressed her cheek.

And every pang of every grief
That ruled my soul an hour,
Has given new splendours to the leaf,
New glories to the flower ;

And melting earth into the heaven
Whose inmost heart is pain,
Has drawn the veils apart and given
Her soul to mine again.

THE UNIVERSALIST.

I.

HE sat with his foolish mouth agape at the golden glare of
 the sea,
 And his wizened and wintry flaxen locks fluttered around
 his ears,
 And his foolish infinite eyes were full of the sky's own glitter
 and glee,
 As he dandled an old Dutch Doll on his knee and sang
 the song of the spheres.

II.

*Blue and red and yellow and green they are melting away in
 the white ;
 Hey ! but the wise old world was wrong and my idiot heart
 was right ;
 Yes ; and the merry-go-round of the stars rolls to my cracked
 old tune,
 Hey ! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped
 over the moon.*

III.

Then he cradled his doll on his crooning heart and cried as
a sea-bird cries ;
And the hot sun reeled like a drunken god through the
violent violet vault :
And the hillside cottage that danced to the deep debauch
of the perfumed skies
Grew palsied and white in the purple heath as a pillar of
Dead Sea salt.

IV.

There were three gaunt sun-flowers nigh his chair : they
were yellow as death and tall ;
And they threw their sharp blue shadowy stars on the blind
white wizard wall ;
And they nodded their heads to the weird old hymn that
daunted the light of the noon,
*Hey ! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped
over the moon.*

V.

The little dog laughed and leered with the white of his eye
as he sidled away
To stare at the dwarfish hunchback waves that crawled to
the foot of the hill,
For his master's infinite mind was wide to the wealth of the
night and the day ;
The walls were down : it was one with the Deep that only
a God can fill.

VI.

Then a tiny maiden of ten sweet summers arrived with a
song and a smile,
And she swung on the elfin garden-gate and sung to the
sea for a while,
And a phantom face went weeping by and a ghost began
to croon
*Hey! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped
over the moon.*

VII.

And she followed a butterfly up to his chair ; and the
moon-calf caught at her hand
And stared at her wide blue startled eyes and muttered,
“ My dear, I have been,
In fact, I am there at this moment, I think, in a wonderful
fairy-land : ”
And he bent and he whispered it low in her ear—“ *I
know why the grass is green.* ”

VIII.

“ I know why the daisy is white, my dear, I know why the
seas are blue ;
I know that the world is a dream, my dear, and I know
that the dream is true ;
I know why the rose and the toad-stool grow, as a curse
and a crimson boon,
*Hey! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped
over the moon.*

IX.

"If I gaze at a rose, do you know, it grows till it over-shadows the earth,

Like a wonderful Tree of Knowledge, my dear, the Tree
of our evil and good;

But I dare not tell you the terrible vision that gave the
toad-stool birth,

The dream of a heart that breaks, my dear, and a Tree
that is bitter with blood.

X.

"Oh, Love may wander wide as the wind that blows from
sea to sea,

But a wooden dream, for me, my dear, and a painted
memory;

For the God that has bidden the toad-stool grow has writ
in his cosmic rune,

*Hey ! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped
over the moon.*"

XI.

Then he stared at the child and he laughed aloud, and she
suddenly screamed and fled,

As he dreamed of enticing her out thro' the ferns to
a quarry that gapped the hill,

To hurtle her down and grin as her gold hair scattered
around her head

Far, far below, like a sunflower disk, so crimson-spattered
and still.

XII.

“Ah, hush!” he cried ; and his dark old eyes were wet
with a sacred love
As he kissed the wooden face of his doll and winked at
the skies above,
“I know, I know why the toad-stools grow, and the rest of
the world will, soon ;
*Hey ! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped
over the moon.*”

XIII.

*Blue and red and yellow and green they are all mixed up in
the white ;*
*Hey ! but the wise old world was wrong and my idiot heart
was right ;*
*Yes ; and the merry-go-round of the stars rolls to my cracked
old tune,*
*Hey ! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped
over the moon.*”

THE BARREL-ORGAN.

THERE'S a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
 In the City as the sun sinks low ;
 And the music's not immortal ; but the world has made it
 sweet
 And fulfilled it with the sunset glow ;
 And it pulses through the pleasures of the City and the
 pain
 That surround the singing organ like a large eternal
 light ;
 And they've given it a glory and a part to play again
 In the Symphony that rules the day and night.

And now it's marching onward through the realms of old
 romance,
 And trolling out a fond familiar tune,
 And now it's roaring cannon down to fight the King of
 France,
 And now it's prattling softly to the moon,
 And all around the organ there's a sea without a shore
 Of human joys and wonders and regrets ;
 To remember and to recompense the music evermore
 For what the cold machinery forgets. . . .

Yes ; as the music changes,
 Like a prismatic glass,
 It takes the light and ranges
 Through all the moods that pass ;

Dissects the common carnival
 Of passions and regrets,
 And gives the world a glimpse of all
 The colours it forgets.

And there *La Traviata* sighs
 Another sadder song ;
 And there *Il Trovatore* cries
 A tale of deeper wrong ;
 And bolder knights to battle go
 With sword and shield and lance,
 Than ever here on earth below
 Have whirled into—a dance !—

Go down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time ;
 Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London !)
 And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's
 wonderland ;
 Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London !)

The cherry-trees are seas of bloom and soft perfume and
 sweet perfume,
 The cherry-trees are seas of bloom (and oh, so near to
 London !)
 And there they say, when dawn is high and all the world's
 a blaze of sky
 The cuckoo, though he's very shy, will sing a song for
 London.

The nightingale is rather rare and yet they say you'll hear
 him there
 At Kew, at Kew in lilac-time (and oh, so near to London !)
 The linnet and the throstle, too, and after dark the long
 halloo
 And golden-eyed *tu-whit*, *tu-whoo* of owls that ogle
 London.

For Noah hardly knew a bird of any kind that isn't heard
 At Kew, at Kew in lilac-time (and oh, so near to London!)
 And when the rose begins to pout and all the chestnut
 spires are out
 You'll hear the rest without a doubt, all chorussing for
 London :—

Come down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time ;
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London !)
And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's
wonderland ;
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London !)

And then the troubadour begins to thrill the golden street,
 In the City as the sun sinks low ;
 And in all the gaudy busses there are scores of weary feet
 Marking time, sweet time, with a dull mechanic beat,
 And a thousand hearts are plunging to a love they'll never
 meet,
 Through the meadows of the sunset, through the poppies
 and the wheat,
 In the land where the dead dreams go.

Verdi, Verdi, when you wrote *Il Trovatore* did you dream
 Of the City when the sun sinks low,
 Of the organ and the monkey and the many-coloured stream
 On the Piccadilly pavement, of the myriad eyes that seem
 To be litten for a moment with a wild Italian gleam
 As *A che la morte* parodies the world's eternal theme
 And pulses with the sunset-glow.

There's a thief, perhaps, that listens with a face of frozen
 stone
 In the City as the sun sinks low ;
 There's a portly man of business with a balance of his own,
 There's a clerk and there's a butcher of a soft reposeful
 tone.

And they're all of them returning to the heavens they have known :

They are crammed and jammed in busses and — they're each of them alone

In the land where the dead dreams go.

There's a very modish woman and her smile is very bland

In the City as the sun sinks low ;

And her hansom jingles onward, but her little jewelled hand Is clenched a little tighter and she cannot understand

What she wants or why she wanders to that undiscovered land,

For the parties there are not at all the sort of thing she planned,

In the land where the dead dreams go.

There's a rowing man that listens and his heart is crying out

In the City as the sun sinks low ;

For the barge, the eight, the Isis, and the coach's whoop and shout,

For the minute-gun, the counting and the long dishevelled rout,

For the howl along the tow-path and a fate that's still in doubt,

For a roughened oar to handle and a race to think about

In the land where the dead dreams go.

There's a labourer that listens to the voices of the dead

In the City as the sun sinks low ;

And his hand begins to tremble and his face to smoulder red

As he sees a loafer watching him and — there he turns his head

And stares into the sunset where his April love is fled,
For he hears her softly singing and his lonely soul is led

Through the land where the dead dreams go.

There's an old and haggard demirep, it's ringing in her ears,
 In the City as the sun sinks low;
 With the wild and empty sorrow of the love that blights
 and sears,
 Oh, and if she hurries onward, then be sure, be sure she
 hears,
 Hears and bears the bitter burden of the unforgotten
 years,
 And her laugh's a little harsher and her eyes are brimmed
 with tears
 For the land where the dead dreams go.

There's a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
 In the City as the sun sinks low;
 Though the music's only Verdi there's a world to make it
 sweet
 Just as yonder yellow sunset where the earth and heaven
 meet
 Mellows all the sooty City! Hark, a hundred thousand
 feet
 Are marching on to glory through the poppies and the
 wheat
 In the land where the dead dreams go.

So it's Jeremiah, Jeremiah,
 What have you to say
 When you meet the garland girls
 Tripping on their way?

All around my gala hat
 I wear a wreath of roses
 (A long and lonely year it is
 I've waited for the May!)
 If any one should ask you,
 The reason why I wear it is—
 My own love, my true love is coming home to-day.

And it's buy a bunch of violets for the lady
(It's lilac-time in London ; it's lilac-time in London !)
 Buy a bunch of violets for the lady
 While the sky burns blue above :

On the other side the street you'll find it shady
(It's lilac-time in London ; it's lilac-time in London !)
 But buy a bunch of violets for the lady,
 And tell her she's your own true love.

There's a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
 In the City as the sun sinks glittering and slow ;
 And the music's not immortal ; but the world has made it
 sweet
 And enriched it with the harmonies that make a song
 complete
 In the deeper heavens of music where the night and
 morning meet,
 As it dies into the sunset-glow ;
 And it pulses through the pleasures of the City and the pain
 That surround the singing organ like a large eternal light,
 And they've given it a glory and a part to play again
 In the Symphony that rules the day and night.

And there, as the music changes,
 The song runs round again.
 Once more it turns and ranges
 Through all its joy and pain,
 Dissects the common carnival
 Of passions and regrets ;
 And the wheeling world remembers all
 The wheeling song forgets.

Once more *La Traviata* sighs
 Another sadder song :
 Once more *Il Trovatore* cries
 A tale of deeper wrong ;

Once more the knights to battle go
With sword and shield and lance
Till once, once more, the shattered foe
Has whirled into—a *dance!*

Come down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time,
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)
And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's
wonderland;
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)

THE DWARF'S TRAGEDY.

I.

IT was a King that rode to hunt upon a morn of May,
 And deep within the greenwood he found himself alone ;
 And while the sounds of horse and hound were dying far
 away,
 He happened on a little Dwarf that sat upon a stone :

*His cap was red as a fox-glove bell,
 He held a fern in his hand ;
 For he was the King of a dreamland dell
 And a prince of Fairyland.*

And the King upon his moon-white steed grew quieter than
 the moon
 That glimmered on the greenwood from out the rosy sky ;
 And the Dwarf peered up and whispered *Hush!* and
 hummed a drowsy tune,
 And like a dream or like a cloud the world went
 drifting by :

*For the Dwarf was listening to a rhyme
 The breeze had taught the flowers ;
 And the blue-bell chime of eternal time
 That speeds the dreamland hours.*

And the King forgot his palace, forgot his crown and throne ;

 And all the world around him was a sea of light and joy,
Where green boughs and wild-flowers and brooks in under-
 tone

Took up the soul's old antiphone of song too sweet to
cloy :

*And the little Dwarf sat still and dreamed
 How knights with sword and helm
Like green and golden beetles gleamed
 Across his fairy realm.*

A blackbird came to peep at him with eyes of glistening dew,
A rabbit lolloped down the glade and played around his
feet,

A linnet sang *The world's a dream ; but every dream is
true ;*

And *True, true, true*, the roses bade their hidden birds
repeat :

*His cap was red as a fox-glove bell,
 He held a fern in his hand ;
For he was the King of a dreamland dell
 And a prince of Fairyland.*

II.

Holla ! Holla ! Holla ! Ho ! a cry across the stillness
broke :

Holla ! Holla ! Holla ! Ho ! the Dwarf leapt up : the King
awoke !

And crashing through the flowers and fern a hundred hoofs
beat heavy and blunt,

And up, around the King and Dwarf, they reined, amazed,
the hunt !

Ah! ha! they laughed, *Ah! ha! ha! ha!* and the little
Dwarf laughed too;
But the good green boughs of the wild-wood sighed against
the rose-rimmed blue;
For the King's chief huntsman laughed too loud, *Let us
take him away to the court;*
And he lifted the Dwarf to his saddle-bow, *Our jest for
to-night: good sport!*

And so to the palace they came, and at night, when laughter
and wine flowed free,
The Dwarf tripped out to caper and sing, with a chuckle of
elvish glee:
And he shook his quaint little shaggy poll and he twisted
his queer little face,
And he kept the revel alive all night with the light of his
last grimace.

And the Princess laughed till the Dwarf looked up at the
tears in her wonderful eyes,
And he smiled and he bowed with his hand on his heart,
and then, as a child praised tries
To better his best, he capered again till he made her soft
sides ache;
Ay, he danced as he never had danced before, and all for
the Princess' sake.

Then, dazed and amazed, through the roar of the court he
saw Her beckon him nigh,
And he crept with a glimmer of pride on his face and a
sharp little woodland cry
Of wonder and fear and wild delight deep down in his
heart, as close
Her face bent down to his quivering face and she pinned
on his breast—a rose.

III.

Roses, roses all around him, roses in her laughing face,
Roses in the dazzling wine-cups drained in honour to the
chase ;
Roses where the rosy jewels burned on snowy breast and
brow,
Roses as he groped out blindly through the feast of rose
and snow.

Out into the moonlit garden where ten thousand roses grew
Tripped the hideous little monster through the gloom of
rose and blue ;
Showed his rose to all the thousands, laughed and sang in
elvish glee :
“ This must be the queen of roses, for the Princess gave
it me.”

Like a little living gargoyle through the passion-flowers he
crept
Towards the glimmering marble basin where like fire the
fountains leapt,
Saw the moths with flower-dust laden flutter towards the
flashing rain,
Tried to scare them from their fate, and found the tiny
task was vain.

On through many a rose-hung alley lit by many a golden
star
On and on he wandered, hearing, here and there, a low
guitar
Breathing to some open casement songs that touched his
eyes with light,
Songs that plucked at all his heart-strings in the silence of
the night.

She and I will go together; hark! the music seems to say
There are shores beyond the sunset; yes; and cities far
away;
Yes; and angel whispers floating hither o'er the sapphire
sea:
This must be the queen of roses, for the Princess gave it me.

IV.

Red as a rose the dawn broke, over the palace towers.
Clasping his Rose of roses, he slept in the shade of the
flowers.
Over him, carved in marble, cold as the foam of the sea,
Venus aglow with the rose-flush dreamed of Eternity.

And the mannikin dreamed—I will show her—ah, but she
will not go
Perhaps, for her palace is marble; but then there is much
to show
Even there, even there, in my forest, in my house, not
made with hands,
How proud I shall be to show her!—she is one that
understands.

I will make her a robe of fawn-skin, I will weave her a
crown of flowers,
She shall hear the chime of the blue-bells that peal the
dreamland hours,
I will bring her fruits and berries and honey, and she shall
eat,
And then, at night, in the star-shine, she will let me sleep
at her feet.

She shall sing, he murmured, the music the fairies bring
from the sky,
She shall learn to chat as a sister with blossom and
butterfly,
She shall watch the mystical dreamer that under the rose-
leaf swings
In a hammock of silken slumber waiting for wonderful
wings.

All that I kept and cherished, my dreams, my beautiful
dreams,
Hidden in fern-clad hollows, flashing with rainbow gleams,
Flung by the fairy cataracts over the spray of the white
Dancing fragrant dog-rose, my dreams of a lost delight;

Mystical strange old secrets, far, so far above
All that the lips can whisper, all that the heart can love, . . .
Oh, words that can never be spoken, dreams that I never
could show
To any but one that loved me, she too, she too must know!

My knights in golden armour, my knights in green and gold,
How we shall watch them together! What tales there are
to be told,
In my forests of fairy blossom, in my house not made with
hands;
How proud I shall be to tell her!—she is one that
understands.

v.

Dawn! he woke, and towards the palace wandered slowly
once again.
On his heart the Rose of roses glimmered like a dream of
pain:

O'er the glowing marble terrace, like a fragment of the night
Crept he, and the great white portals ached upon his
yearning sight.

Marble! Were the red ten thousand murmuring that he
dared to touch
Love's domain with his brown foot-soles, what if he should
stain or smutch
Something that the Princess treasured? and the peacock's
flaming dyes
Made him feel so brown and tattered: ah, he shrank from
those great eyes!

On through many a gorgeous archway lit with shields of
lustrous gloom,
On past many a pictured arras, many a rich enchanted
room:
She and I will go together! All at once, it seemed there
crept
Something through his tears to meet him, some strange
thing that moaned and wept;

Some strange monster from behind that lustrous glass upon
the wall;
On its heart it clasped a rose, a red rose just about to fall;
Like, so like his queen of roses that the Dwarf shrank back
in fear;
And the monster seemed to mock him! Was it but a
shadow there?

Slowly tow'rs the magic mirror crept the little Dwarf
again,
And his image came to meet him with grey twisted lips
of pain:

Out—out—out—into the garden, where the roses fluttered
and beat,
Rushed he to the cold white statue, and fell sobbing, at her
feet.

And his face grew grey and greyer as the birds grew wild
with mirth,
And the roses heard him whisper with his lips against the
earth,
Where the cold white Aphrodite dreamed of Love's
immortal sea,
Still, my rose is queen of roses, for the Princess gave it me.

VI.

Ah! ha! they laughed, *Ah! ha! ha! ha!* but the
huntsman laughed too loud,
As all aglow with purple and gold up strutted the courtly
crowd.
“Come, come, little monster, and dance, ha! ha!” and the
Princess piped, “Oh dear,
He is fast asleep, with a rose on his breast! He has
stolen the rose, I fear!”

“Come, come, little monster, and dance, ha! ha!” and one
with a thrust of his foot
Stirred him: the grey little face fell back on the courtier's
brothered boot.
“He must certainly dance!” the Princess cried; but the
chamberlain shook his head
As he felt the poor little pigeon-breast, “Princess, Princess,
he is dead.”

VII.

So the gardeners carried him far away, beneath the golden moon

That glimmered on the greenwood from out the rosy sky,

And they left him in a twilit glade that breathed a drowsy tune,

As like a cloud or like a dream the world went drifting by.

A blackbird came to look at him with eyes of glistening dew,
A rabbit lolloped down the glade and played around his feet :

A linnet sang "The world's a dream ; but every dream is true ;"

And "True, true, true," the roses bade their hidden birds repeat.

*His cap was red as a fox-glove bell,
He held a fern in his hand ;
For he was the King of a dreamland dell
And a prince of Fairyland*

THE LAST BATTLE.

KINGS of the earth, Kings of the earth, the trumpet rings
 for warning,
 And like the golden swords that ray from out the setting
 sun
 The shout goes out of the trumpet mouth across the hills
 of morning,
 Wake ; for the last great battle dawns and all the wars
 are done.

Now all the plains of Europe smoke with marching hooves
 of thunder,
 And through each ragged mountain-gorge the guns begin
 to gleam ;
 And round a hundred cities where the women watch and
 wonder,
 The tramp of passing armies aches and faints into a
 dream.

The King of Ind is drawing nigh : a hundred leagues are
 clouded
 Along his loud earth-shaking march from east to western
 sea :
 The King o' the Setting Sun is here and all the seas are
 shrouded
 With sails that carry half the world to front Eternity.

Soon shall the darkness roll around the grappling of the nations,

A darkness lit with deadly gleams of blood and steel and fire;

Soon shall the last great pæan of earth's war-worn generations Roar through the thunder-clouded air round War's red funeral pyre.

But here defeat and victory are both allied with heaven,

The enfolding sky makes every foe the centre of her dome, Each fights for God and his own right, and unto each is given

The right to find the heart of heaven where'er he finds his home.

O, who shall win, and who shall lose, and who shall take the glory

Here at the meeting of the roads, where every cause is right?

O, who shall live, and who shall die, and who shall tell the story?

Each strikes for faith and fatherland in that immortal fight.

High on the grey old hills of Time the last immortal rally, Under the storm of the last great tattered flag, shall laugh to see

The blood of Armageddon roll from every smoking valley, Shall laugh aloud, then rush on death for God and chivalry.

Kings of the earth, Kings of the earth, O, which of you then shall inherit

The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory? for the world's old light grows dim

And the cry of you all goes up all night to the dark enfolding Spirit,

Each of you fights for God and home; but God, ah, what of Him?

THE PARADOX.

"I Am that I Am."

¶

ALL that is broken shall be mended ;
 All that is lost shall be found ;
 I will bind up every wound
 When that which is begun shall be ended.
 Not peace I brought among you but a sword
 To divide the night from the day,
 When I sent My worlds forth in their battle-array
 To die and to live,
 To give and to receive,
 Saith the Lord.

II.

Of old time they said none is good save our God ;
 But ye that have seen how the ages have shrunk from my
 rod,
 And how red is the wine-press wherein at my bidding they
 trod,
 Have answered and said that with Eden I fashioned the
 snake,
 That I mould you of clay for a moment, then mar you
 and break,
 And there is none evil but I, the supreme Evil, God.

Lo, I say unto both, I am neither ;
 But greater than either ;
 For meeting and mingling in Me they become neither evil
 nor good ;
 Their cycle is rounded, they know neither hunger nor food,
 They need neither sickle nor seed-time, nor root nor fruit,
 They are ultimate, infinite, absolute.
 Therefore I say unto all that have sinned,
 East and West and South and North
 The wings of my measureless love go forth
 To cover you all : they are free as the wings of the wind.

III.

Consider the troubled waters of the sea
 Which never rest ;
 As the wandering waves are ye ;
 Yet assuaged and appeased and forgiven,
 As the seas are gathered together under the infinite
 glory of heaven,
 I gather you all to my breast.
 But the sins and the creeds and the sorrows that trouble
 the sea
 Relapse and subside,
 Chiming like chords in a world-wide symphony
 As they cease to chide ;
 For they break and they are broken of sound and hue,
 And they meet and they murmur and they mingle anew,
 Interweaving, intervolving, like waves : they have no stay :
 They are all made as one with the deep, when they sink
 and are vanished away ;
 Yea, all is toned at a turn of the tide
 To a calm and golden harmony ;
 But I—shall I wonder or greatly care,
 For their depth or their height ?

Shall it be more than a song in my sight
 How many wandering waves there were,
 Or how many colours and changes of light ?

It is your eyes that see
 And take heed of these things : they were fashioned
 for you, not for Me.

IV.

With the stars and the clouds I have clothed Myself here
 for your eyes
 To behold That which Is. I have set forth the strength of
 the skies
 As one draweth a picture before you to make your hearts
 wise ;
 That the infinite souls I have fashioned may know as I
 know,

Visibly revealed
 In the flowers of the field,
 Yea, declared by the stars in their courses, the tides in their
 flow,
 And the clash of the world's wide battle as it sways to and
 fro,
 Flashing forth as a flame
 The unnameable Name,
 The ineffable Word,
I am the Lord.

V.

I am the End to which the whole world strives :
 Therefore are ye girdled with a wild desire and shod
 With sorrow ; for among you all no soul
 Shall ever cease or sleep or reach its goal
 Of union and communion with the Whole,
 Or rest content with less than being God.

Still, as unending asymptotes, your lives
 In all their myriad wandering ways
 Approach Me with the progress of the golden days ;
 Approach Me ; for my love contrives
 That ye should have the glory of this
 For ever ; yea, that life should blend
 With life and only vanish away
 From day to wider wealthier day,
 Like still increasing spheres of light that melt and merge in
 wider spheres
 Even as the infinite years of the past melt in the infinite
 future years.
 Each new delight of sense,
 Each hope, each love, each fear,
 Widens, relumes and recreates each sphere,
 From a new ring and nimbus of pre-eminence.
 I am the Sphere without circumference :
 I only and for ever comprehend
 All others that within me meet and blend.
 Death is but the blinding kiss
 Of two finite infinities ;
 Two finite infinite orbs
 The splendour of the greater of which absorbs
 The less, though both like Love have no beginning and no
 end.

VI.

Therefore is Love's own breath
 Like Knowledge, a continual death ;
 And all his laughter and kisses and tears,
 And woven wiles of peace and strife,
 That ever widen thus your temporal spheres,
 Are making of the memory of your former years
 A very death in life.

VII.

I am that I am ;
 Ye are evil and good ;
 With colour and glory and story and song ye are fed as
 with food :
 The cold and the heat,
 The bitter and the sweet,
 The calm and the tempest fulfil my Word ,
 Yet will ye complain of my two-edged sword
 That has fashioned the finite and mortal and given you the
 sweetness of strife,
 The blackness and whiteness,
 The darkness and brightness,
 Which sever your souls from the formless and void and
 hold you fast-fettered to life ?

VIII.

Behold now, is Life not good ?
 Yea, is it not also much more than the food,
 More than the raiment, more than the breath ?
 Yet Strife is its name !
 Say, which will ye cast out first from the furnace, the fuel
 or the flame ?
 Would ye all be as I am ; and know neither evil nor good ;
 neither life ; neither death ;
 Or mix with the void and the formless till all were as one
 and the same ?

IX.

I am that I am ; the Container of all things : kneel, lift
 up your hands
 To the high Consummation of good and of evil which none
 understands ;
 The divine Paradox, the ineffable Word, in whose light
 the poor souls that ye trod
 Underfoot as too vile for their fellows are at terrible union
 with God !

Am I not over both evil and good,
 The righteous man and the shedder of blood?
 Shall I save or slay?
 I am neither the night nor the day,
 Saith the Lord.

Judge not, oh ye that are round my footstool, judge not,
 ere the hour be born
 That shall laugh you also to scorn.

x.

Ah, yet I say unto all that have sinned,
 East and West and South and North
 The wings of my measureless love go forth
 To cover you all : they are free as the wings of the wind.

xi.

But one thing is needful ; and ye shall be true
 To yourselves and the goal and the God that ye seek ;
 Yea, the day and the night shall requite it to you
 If ye love one another, if your love be not weak.

xii.

Since I sent out my worlds in their battle-array
 To die and to live,
 To give and to receive,
 Not peace, not peace, I have brought among you but a sword,
 To divide the night from the day,
 Saith the Lord ;
 Yet all that is broken shall be mended,
 And all that is lost shall be found,
 I will bind up every wound,
 When that which is begun shall be ended.

THE PROGRESS OF LOVE.

A LYRICAL SYMPHONY.

I.

IN other worlds I loved you, long ago :
 Love that hath no beginning hath no end.
 The woodbine whispers, low and sweet and low,
 In other worlds I loved you, long ago ;
 The firwoods murmur and the sea-waves know
 The message that the setting sun shall send.
 In other worlds I loved you, long ago :
 Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

II.

And God sighed in the sunset ; and the sea
 Chanted the soft recessional of Time
 Against the golden shores of mystery ;

And ever as that long low change and chime
 With one slow sob of molten music yearned
 Westward, it seemed as if the Love sublime

Almost uttered itself, where the waves burned
 In little flower-soft flames of rose and green
 That woke to seaward, while the tides returned

Rising and falling, ruffled and serene,
With all the mirrored tints of heaven above
Shimmering through their mystic myriad sheen.

As a dove's burnished breast throbbing with love
Swells and subsides to call her soft-eyed mate
Home through the rosy gloom of glen or grove,

So when the greenwood noon was growing late
The sea called softly through the waste of years,
Called to the star that still can consecrate

The holy golden haze of human tears
Which tinges every sunset with our grief
Until the perfect Paraclete appears.

Ah, the long sigh that yields the world relief
Rose and relapsed across Eternity,
Making a joy of sorrows that are brief,

As, o'er the bright enchantment of the sea,
Facing the towers of that old City of Pain
Which stands upon the shores of mystery

And frowns across the immeasurable main,
Venus among her cloudy sunset flowers
Woke; and earth melted into heaven again.

For even the City's immemorial towers
Were tinted into secret tone and time,
Like old forgotten tombs that age embowers

With muffling roses and with mossy rime
Until they seem no monument of ours,
But one more note in earth's accordant chime.

Oh Love, Love, Love, all dreams, desires and powers,
Were but as chords of that ineffable psalm ;
And all the long blue lapse of summer hours,

And all the breathing sunset's golden balm
By that æonian sorrow were resolved
As dew into the music's infinite calm,

Through which the suns and moons and stars revolved
According to the song's divine decree,
Till Time was but a tide of intervolved

And interweaving worlds of melody ;
In other worlds I loved you, long ago,—
The angelic citoles fainted o'er the sea ;

And seraph citerns answered, sweet and low,
From where the sunset and the moonrise blend,—
In other worlds I loved you, long ago ;

Love that hath no beginning hath no end ;
Oh Love, Love, Love, the bitter City of Pain
Bidding the golden echoes westward wend,

Chimed in accordant undertone again :
Though every grey old tower rose like a tomb
To mock the glory of the shoreless main

They could but strike such discords as illume
The music with strange gleams of utter light
And hallow all the valley's rosy gloom.

And there, though greily sinking out of sight
Before the wonders of the sky and sea,
Back through the valley, back into the night,

While mystery melted into mystery,
 The City still rebuffed the far sweet West
 That dimmed her sorrows with infinity;

Yet sometimes yearning o'er the sea's bright breast
 To that remote Avilion would she gaze
 Where all lost loves and weary warriors rest.

Then she remembered, through that golden haze,
 (Oh faint as flowers the rose-white waves resound)
 Her Arthur whom she loved in the dead days,

And how he sailed to heal him of his wound,
 And how he lives and reigns eternally
 Where now that unknown love is throned and crowned

Who laid his bleeding head against her knee
 And loosed the bitter breast-plate and unbound
 His casque and brought him strangely o'er the sea,

And how she reigns beside him on that shore
 For ever (Yrma, queen, bend down to me)
 And they twain have no sorrow any more.

III.

They have forgotten all that vanished away
 When life's dark night died into death's bright day;
 They have forgotten all except the gleam
 Of light when once he kissed her in a dream
 Once on the lips and once upon the brow
 In the white orb of God's transcendent Now;
 And even then he knew that, long before,
 Their eyes had met upon some distant shore;
 Yea; that most lonely and immortal face
 Which dwells beyond the dreams of time and space
 Bowed down to him from out the happy place

And whispered to him, low and sweet and low
In other worlds I loved you long ago;
 And then he knew his love could never die
 Because his queen was throned beyond the sky
 And called him to his own immortal sphere
 Forgetting Launcelot and Guinevere.

So Yrma reigns with Arthur, and they know
 They loved on earth a million years ago ;
 And watched the sea-waves wistfully westward wend ;
 And heard a voice whispering in their flow,
 And calling through the silent sunset glow,
Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

IV.

It was about the dawn of day
 I heard Etain and Anwyl say
 The waving ferns are a fairy forest,
 It is time, it is time to wander away ;

For the dew is bright on the heather bells,
 And the breeze in the clover sways and swells,
 As the waves on the blue sea wake and wander,
 Over and under the braes and dells.

She was eight years old that day,
 Full of laughter and play ;
 Eight years old and Anwyl nine,—
 Two young lovers were they.

Two young lovers were they,
 Born in the City of Pain ;
 There was never a song in the world so gay
 As the song of the child, Etain ;

There was never a laugh so sweet
With the ripple of fairy bells,
And never a fairy foot so fleet
Dancing down the woodland dells !

She was eight years old that day,
Two young lovers were they.

There was never a sea of mystical gleams
Glooming under enchanted skies
Deep as the dark miraculous dreams
In Anwyl's haunted eyes.

There was never a glory of light
Around the carolling lark
As Etain's eyes were brave and bright
To daunt the coming dark.

Two young lovers were they
Born in the City of Pain ;
There was never a song in the world so gay
As the song of the child, Etain ;

Blithe as the wind in the trees,
Blithe as the bird on the bough,
Blithe as the bees in the sweet Heart's-ease
Where Love lies bleeding now.

v.

And God sighed in the sunset ; and the sea
Forgot her sorrow, and all the breathless West
Grew quiet as the blue tranquillity

That clad the broken mountain's brilliant breast,
Over the City, with deep heather-bloom
Heaving from crag to crag in sweet unrest,

A sea of dim rich colour and warm perfume
Whose billows rocked the drowsy honey-bee
Among the golden isles of gorse and broom

Like some enchanted ancient argosy
Drunkenly blundering over seas of dream
Past unimagined isles of mystery,

Over whose yellow sands the soft waves cream,
And sunbeams float and toss across the bare
Rose-white arms and perilous breasts that gleam

Where sirens wind their glossy golden hair ;
Oh, miles on miles, the honeyed heather-bloom
Heaving its purple through the high bright air

Rolled a silent glory of gleam and gloom
From mossy crag to crag and crest to crest
Untroubled by the valley's depth of doom.

The hawk dropped down into the pine-forest
And, far below, the lavrock ruffled her wings
Blossomwise over her winsome secret nest.

Then suddenly, softly, as when a fairy sings
Out of the heart of a rose in the heart of the fern,
Or in the floating starlight faintly rings

The frail blue hare-bells—turn again, and turn,
Under and over, the silvery crescents cry
To where the crimson fox-glove belfries burn

And with a deeper softer peal reply,
There came a ripple of music through the roses
That rustled on the dimmest rim of sky

Where many a frame of fretted leaves encloses
 For lovers wandering in the fern-wet wood
 An arch of summer sea that softly dozes

As if all mysteries were understood :
 Yrma, my queen, what love could understand
 That faint sweet music, *God saith all is good,*

As those two children, hand in sunburnt hand,
 Over the blithe blue hills and far away
 Wandered into their own green fairyland ?

VI.

For the song is lost that shook the dew
 Where the wild musk-roses glisten,
 When the sunset dreamed that a dream was true
 And the birds were hushed to listen.

The song is lost that shook the night
 With wings of richer fire,
 When the years had touched their eyes with light
 And their souls with a new desire ;

And the new delight of the strange old story
 Burned in the flower-soft skies,
 And nine more years with a darker glory
 Had deepened the light of her eyes ;

But lost, oh more than lost the song
 That shook the rose to tears,
 As hand in hand they danced along
 Through childhood's everlasting years.

“ Oh, Love has wings,” the linnet sings ;
 But the dead return no more, no more ;
 And the sea is breaking its old grey heart
 Against the golden shore.

She was eight years old that day,
Two young lovers were they.

If every song as they danced along
Paused on the springing spray ;
Is there never a bird in the wide greenwood
Will hush its heart to-day ?

There's never a leaf with dew impearled
To make their pathway sweet,
And never a blossom in all the world
That knows the kiss of their feet.

No light to-night declares the word
That thrilled the blossomed bough,
And stilled the happy singing bird
That none can silence now.

The weary nightingale may sob
With her bleeding breast against a thorn,
And the wild white rose with every throb
Grow red as the laugh of morn ;

With wings outspread she sinks her head
But Love returns no more, no more ;
And the sea is breaking its old grey heart
Against the golden shore.

Born in the City of Pain ;
Ah, who knows, who knows
When Death shall turn to delight again
Or a wound to a red red rose ?

Eight years old that day,
Full of laughter and play ;
Eight years old and Anwyl nine.—
Two young lovers were they.

VII.

And down the scented heather-drowsy hills
 The bare-foot children wandered, hand in hand.
 And paddled through the laughing silver rills
 In quest of fairyland ;
 And in each little sunburnt hand a spray,
 A purple fox-glove bell-branch lightly swung,
 And Anwyl told Etain how, far away,
 One day he wandered through the dreamland dells
 And watched the moonlit fairies as they sung
 And tolled the fox-glove bells ;
 And oh, how sweetly, sweetly to and fro
 The fragrance of the music reeled and rung
 Under the loaded boughs of starry May.

And God sighed in the sunset, and the sea
 Grew quieter than the hills : the mystery
 Of ocean, earth and sky was like a word
 Uttered, but all unheard,
 Uttered by every wave and cloud and leaf
 With all the immortal glory of mortal grief ;
 And every wave that broke its heart of gold
 In music on the rainbow-dazzled shore
 Seemed telling, strangely telling, evermore
 A story that must still remain untold.

Oh, *Once upon a time*, and o'er and o'er
 As aye the *Happy ever after* came
 The enchanted waves lavished their faery lore

And tossed a foam-bow and a rosy flame
 Around the whispers of the creaming foam,
 Till the old rapture with the new sweet name

Through all the old romance began to roam,
 And Anwyl, gazing out across the sea,
 Dreamed that he heard the distance whisper "Come."

"Etain," he murmured softly and wistfully,
 With the soul's wakening wonder in his eyes,
 "Is it not strange to think that there can be

"No end for ever and ever to those skies,
 No shore beyond, or if there be a shore
 Still without end the world beyond it lies ;

"Think ; think ; Etain ;" and all his faery lore
 Mixed with the faith that brought all gods to birth
 And sees new heavens transcend for evermore

The poor impossibilities of earth ;
 But Etain only laughed : the world to her
 Was one sweet smile of very present mirth ;

Its flowers were only flowers, common or rare ;
 Her soul was like a little garden closed
 By rose-clad walls, a place of southern air

Islanded from the Mystery that reposed
 Its vast and brooding wings on that abyss
 Through which like little clouds that dreamed and dozed

The thoughts of Anwyl wandered toward some bliss
 Unknown, unfathomed, far, how far away,
 Where God has gathered all the eternities
 Into strange heavens, beyond the night and day.

VIII.

And over the rolling golden bay,
 In the funeral pomp of the dying day,
 The bell of Time was wistfully tolling
 A million million years away ;

And over the heather-drowsy hill
Where the burdened bees were buzzing still,
The two little sun-bright barefoot children
Wandered down at the flowers' own will;

For still as the bell in the sunset tolled,
The meadow-sweet and the mary-gold
And the purple orchis kissed their ankles
And lured them over the listening wold.

And the feathery billows of blue-gold grass
Bowed and murmured and bade them pass,
Where a sigh of the sea-wind softly told them
There is no Time—Time never was.

And what if a sorrow were tolled to rest
Where the rich light mellowed away in the West,
As a glory of fruit in an autumn orchard
Heaped and asleep o'er the sea's ripe breast?

Why should they heed it, what should they know
Of the years that come or the years that go,
With the warm blue sky around and above them
And the wild thyme whispering to and fro?

For they heard in the dreamy dawn of day
A fairy harper faintly play,
Follow me, follow me, little children,
Over the hills and far away;

Where the dew is bright on the heather-bells,
And the breeze in the clover sways and swells,
As the waves on the blue sea wake and wander,
Over and under the braes and dells.

And the hare-bells tinkled and rang Ding dong
Bell in the dell as they danced along,

And their feet were stained on the hills with honey,
And crushing the clover till evensong.

And, oh the ripples that rolled in rhyme
Under the wild blue banks of thyme,

To the answering rhyme of the rolling ocean's
Golden glory of change and chime !

For they came to a stream and her fairy lover
Caught at her hand and swung her over,

And the broad wet buttercups laughed and gilded
Their golden knees in the deep sweet clover.

There was never a lavrock up in the skies
Blithe as the laugh of their lips and eyes,

As they glanced and glittered across the meadows
To waken the sleepy butterflies.

There was never a wave on the sea so gay
As the light that danced on their homeward way

Where the waving ferns were a fairy forest
And a thousand years as yesterday.

*She was eight years old that day,
Full of laughter and play ;
Eight years old and Anwyl nine,—
Two young lovers were they.*

And when the clouds like folded sheep
Were drowsing over the drowsy deep,

And like a rose in a golden cradle
Anwyl breathed on the breast of sleep,

Or ever the petals and leaves were furled
At the vesper-song of the sunset-world,
The sleepy young rose of nine sweet summers
Dreamed in his rose-bèd cosily curled.

And what if the light of his nine bright years
Glistened with laughter or glimmered with tears,
Or gleamed like a mystic globe around him
White as the light of the sphere of spheres ?

And what if a glory of angels there,
Starring an orb of ineffable air,
Came floating down from the Gates of jasper
That melt into flowers at a maiden's prayer ?

And what if he dreamed of a fairy face
Wondering out of some happy place,
Quietly as a star at sunset
Shines in the rosy dreams of space ?

For only as far as the west wind blows
The sweets of a swinging full-blown rose,
Eight years old and queen of the lilies
Little Etain slept—ah, how close !

At a flower-cry over the moonlit lane
In a cottage of roses dreamed Etain,
And their purple shadows kissed at her lattice
And dappled her sigh-soft counterpane ;

And or ever Etain with her golden head
Had nestled to sleep in her lily-white bed,
She breathed a dream to her fairy lover,
Please God bless Anwyl and me, she said.

And a song arose in the rose-white West,
And a whisper of wings o'er the sea's bright breast,
 And a cry where the moon's old miracle wakened
A glory of pearl o'er the pine-forest.

Why should they heed it ? What should they know
Of the years to come or the years to go ?
 With the starry skies around and above them
And the roses whispering to and fro.

Ah, was it a song of the mystic morn
When into their beating hearts the thorn
 Should pierce through the red wet crumpled roses
And all the sorrow of love be born ?

Ah, was it a cry of the wild wayside
Whereby one day they must surely ride,
 Out of the purple garden of passion
To Calvary, to be crucified ?

Only the sound of the distant sea
Broke on the shores of Mystery,
 And tolled as a bell might toll for sorrow
Till Time be tombed in Eternity ;

And in their dreams they only heard
Far away, one secret bird
 Sing, till the passionate purple twilight
Throbbed with the wonder of one sweet word :

One sweet word and the wonder awoke,
And the leaves and the flowers and the starlight spoke
 In silent rapture the strange old secret
That none e'er knew till the death-dawn broke ;

One sweet whisper, and hand in hand
 They wandered in dreams through fairyland,
 Rapt in the star-bright mystical music
 Which only a child can understand.

But never a child in the world can tell
 The wonderful tale he knows so well,
 Though ever as old Time dies in the sunset
 It tolls and tolls like a distant bell.

Love, love, love ; and they hardly knew
 The sense of the glory that round them grew ;
 But the world was a wide enchanted garden ;
 And the song, the song, the song rang true.

And they danced with the fairies in emerald rings
 Arched by the light of their rainbow wings,
 And they heard the wild green Harper striking
 A starlight over the golden strings.

Love, oh love ; and they roamed once more
 Through a forest of flowers on a fairy shore,
 And the sky was a wild bright laugh of wonder
 And the West was a dream of the years of yore.

In other worlds I loved you, long ago :
 Love that hath no beginning hath no end :
 The heather whispers low and sweet and low,
 In other worlds I loved you, long ago ;
 The meadows murmur and the firwoods know
 The message that the kindling East shall send ;
 In other worlds I loved you, long ago :
 Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

IX.

Out of the deep, my dream, out of the deep,
Yrma, thy voice came to me in my sleep,
And through a rainbow woven of human tears
I saw two lovers wandering down the years ;
Two children, first, that roamed a sunset land,
And then two lovers wandering hand in hand,
Forgetful of their childhood's Paradise,
For nine more years had darkened in their eyes,
And heaven itself could hardly find again
Anwyl, the star-child, or the flower, Etain.

For on a day in May, as through the wood
With earth's new passion beating in his blood
He went alone, an empty-hearted youth,
Seeking he knew not what white flower of truth
Or beauty, on all sides he seemed to see
Swift subtle hints of some new harmony,
Yet all unheard, ideal, and incomplete,
A silent song compact of hopes and fears,
A music such as lights the wandering feet
Of Yrma when on earth she reappears.
And he forgot that sad grey City of Pain,
For all earth's old romance returned again,
And as he went, his dreaming soul grew glad
To think that he might meet with Galahad
Or Parsifal in some green glade of fern,
Or see between the boughs a helmet burn
And hear a joyous laugh kindle the sky
As through the wood Sir Launcelot rode by
With face upturned to take the sun like wine.
Ah, was it love that made the whole world shine
Like some great angel's face, blinded with bliss,
While Anwyl dreamed of bold Sir Amadis
And Guinevere's white arms and Iseult's kiss,
And that glad island in a golden sea
Where Arthur lives and reigns eternally ?

Surely the heavens were one wide rose-white flame
 As down the path to meet him Yrma came ;
 Ah, was it Yrma, with those radiant eyes,
 That came to greet and lead him through the skies,
 The skies that gloomed and gleamed so far above
 The little wandering prayers of human love ? . . .
 He had forgotten all except the gleam
 Of light when once he kissed her in a dream, . . .
 For surely then he knew that long before
 Their eyes had met upon some distant shore. . . .
 Ah, was it Yrma whose red lips he met
 Between the branches, where the leaves were wet ?
 Etain or Yrma, for it seemed her face
 Bent down upon him from some happy place
 And whispered to him, low and sweet and low,
In other worlds I loved you, long ago !
 And he, too, knew his love could never die,
 Because his queen was throned beyond the sky.

Yet in sweet mortal eyes he met her now
 And kissed Etain beneath the hawthorn bough,
 And dared to dream his infinite dream was true
 On earth and reign with Etain, dream he knew
 Why leaves were green and skies were fresh and blue ;
 Yea, dream he knew, as children dream they know
 They knew all this a million years ago,
 And watched the sea-waves wistfully westward wend
 And heard a voice whispering in their flow
 And calling through the silent sunset-glow
Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

Ah, could they see in the Valley of Gloom
 That clove the cliffs behind the City ;
 Ah, could they hear in the forest of Doom
 The peril that neared without pause or pity ?
 Behind the veils of ivy and vine,
 Wild musk-roses and white woodbine,

In glens that were wan as with moonlit tears
And rosy with ghosts of eglantine
And pale as with lilies of long-past years,
Ah, could they see, could they hear, could they know
Behind that beautiful outward show,
Behind the pomp and glory of life
That seething old anarchic strife?
For there in many a dim blue glade
Where the rank red poppies burned,
And if perchance some dreamer strayed
He nevermore returned,
Cold incarnate memories
Of earth's retributory throes,
Deadly desires and agonies
Dark as the worm that never dies,
In the outer night arose,
And waited under those wonderful skies
With Hydra heads and mocking eyes
That winked upon the waning West
From out the gloom of the oak-forest,
Till all the wild profound of wood
That o'er the haunted valley slept
Glowed with eyes like pools of blood
As, lustng after a hideous food,
Through the haggard vistas crept
Without a cry, without a hiss,
The serpent broods of the abyss.
Ancestral folds in darkness furled
Since the beginnings of the world.
Ring upon awful ring uprose
That obscure heritage of foes,
The exceeding bitter heritage
Which still a jealous God bestows
From inappellable age to age,
The ghostly worms that softly move
Through every gray old corse of love
And creep across the coffined years
To batten on our blood and tears;

And there were hooded shapes of death
Gaunt and gray, cruel and blind,
Stealing softly as a breath
Through the woods that loured behind
The City ; hooded shapes of fear
Slowly, slowly stealing near ;
While all the gloom that round them rolled
With intertwisting coils grew cold.
And there with leer and gap-toothed grin
Many a gaunt ancestral Sin
With clutching fingers, white and thin,
Strove to put the boughs aside ;
And still before them all would glide
Down the wavering moon-white track
One lissom figure, clad in black ;
Who wept at mirth and mocked at pain
And murmured a song of the wind and the rain ;
His laugh was wild with a secret grief ;
His eyes were deep like woodland pools ;
And, once and again, as his face drew near
In a rosy gloaming of eglanterie,
All the ghosts that gathered there
Bowed together, naming his name .
Lead us, ah thou *Shadow of a Leaf*,
Child and master of all our shame,
Fool of Doubt and King of Fools.

Now the linnet had ended his even-song,
And the lark dropt down from his last wild ditty
And ruffled his wings and his speckled breast
Blossom-wise over his June-sweet nest ;
While winging wistfully into the West
As a fallen petal is wafted along
The last white sea-mew sought for rest ;
And, over the gleaming heave and swell
Of the swinging seas,
Drowsily breathed the dreaming breeze,

Then, suddenly, out of the Valley of Gloom
 That clove the cliffs behind the City,
 Out of the silent forest of Doom
 That clothed the valley with clouds of fear
 Swelled the boom of a distant bell
 Once, and the towers of the City of Pain
 Echoed it, without hope or pity.
 The tale of that tolling who can tell ?
 That dark old music who shall declare ?
 Who shall interpret the song of the bell ?

Is it nothing to you, all ye that hear,
Sorrowed the bell, Is it nothing to you ?
Is it nothing to you ? the shore-wind cried,
Is it nothing to you ? the cliffs replied.
 But the low light laughed and the skies were blue,
 And this was only the song of the bell.

X.

ANWYL.

A darkened casement in a darker room
 Was all his home, whence weary and bowed and white
 He watched across the slowly gathering gloom
 The slowly westering light.

Bitterness in his heavy-clouded eyes,
 Bitterness as of heaven's intestine wars
 Brooded ; he looked upon the unfathomed skies
 And whispered—to the stars—

Some day, he said, she will forget all this
 That she calls life, and looking far above
 See throned among the great eternities
 This dream of mine, this love ;

Love that has given my soul these wings of fire
To beat in glory above the sapphire sea,
Until the wings of the infinite desire
Close in infinity ;

Love that has taken the glory of hawthorn boughs,
And all the dreaming beauty of hazel skies,
As ministers to the radiance of her brows
And haunted April eyes ;

Love that is hidden so deep beneath the dust
Of little daily duties and delights,
Till that reproachful face of hers grows just
And God at last requites

A soul whose dream was deeper than the skies,
A heart whose hope was wider than the sea,
Yet could not enter through his true love's eyes
Their gray infinity.

And so I know I wound her all day long
Because my heart must seem so far away ;
And even my love completes the silent wrong
For all that it can say

Seems vast and meaningless to mortal sense ;
Its vague desire can never reach its goal
Till knowledge vanishes in omniscience
And God surrounds her soul,

Breaking its barriers down and flooding in
Through all her wounds in one almighty tide,
Mingling her soul with that great Love wherein
My soul waits, glorified.

xi.

ETAIN.

My love is dying, dying in my heart ;
 There is no song in heaven for such as I
 Who watch the days and years of youth depart,
 The bloom decay and die ;

The rose that withers in the hollow cheek,
 The leaden rings that mark us old and wise ;
 And Time that writes what Pity dares not speak
 Around the fading eyes.

He dreams he loves ; but only loves his dream ;
 And in his dream he never can forget
 Abana seems a so much mightier stream
 And Pharpar wider yet ;

The little deeds of love that light the shrine
 Of common daily duties with such gleams
 Of heaven, to me are scarcely less divine
 Than those poor wandering dreams

Of deeds that never happen ! I give him this,
 This heart he cannot find in heaven above ;
 This heart, this heart of all the eternities,
 This life of mine, this love ;

Love that is lord of all the world at once
 And never bade the encircled spirit roam
 To the circle's bound, beyond the moons and suns,
 But makes each heart its home,

And every home the heart of Space and Time,
 And each and all a heaven if love could reign ;
 One infinite untranscended heaven sublime
 With God's own joy and pain.

Why, that was what God meant, to set us here
 In Eden, when he saw that all was good ;
 And we have made the sun black with despair,
 And turned the moon to blood.

So has Love taught me that too learnèd tongue,
 And in his poorer wisdom made me wise ;
 I grew so proud of the red drops we wrung
 From all philosophies.

My heart is narrow, foolish, what you will ;
 But this I know God meant who set us here,
 And gave each soul the Infinities to fulfil
 From its own widening sphere.

To annex new regions to the soul's domain,
 To expand the circle of the golden hours,
 Till it enfolds again and yet again
 New heavens, new fields, new flowers,

Oh, this is well ; but still the central heart
 Is here at home, not wandering like the wind
 That gathers nothing, but must still depart
 Leaving a waste behind.

Where is the song I sang that April morn,
 When all the poet in his eyes awoke
 My sleeping heart to heaven ; and love was born ?
 For while the glad day broke

We met ; and as the softly kindling skies
 Thrilled through the scented vistas of the wood
 I felt the sudden love-light in his eyes
 Kindle my beating blood.

*Happy day, happy day,
 Chasing the clouds of the night away
 And bidding the dreams of the dawn depart
 Over the freshening April blue,
 Till the blossoms awake to welcome the May,
 And the world is made anew ;
 And the blackbird sings on the dancing spray
 With eyes of glistening dew ;
 " Happy, happy, happy day ; "
 For he knows that his love is true ;
 He knows that his love is true, my heart,
 He knows that his love is true !*

I cannot sing it : these tears blind me : love,
 Oh love, come back before it is too late,
 Why, even Christ came down to us from above :
 I think His love was great ;

Yet he stood knocking, knocking at the door
 Until his piteous hands were worn with scars ;
 He did not hide that crown of love he wore
 Among the lonely stars.

This round of hours, the daily flowers I cull
 Are more to me than all the rolling spheres,
 A wounded bird at hand more pitiful
 Than some great seraph's tears.

How should I join the great wise choir above
 - With my starved spirit's pale inhuman dearth,
 Who never heard the cry of heavenly love
 Rise from the sweet-souled earth ?

Yet it is I he needs, and I for whom
 His greed exceeds, his dreams fly wide of the mark !
 Is it all self ? I wander in the gloom ;
 The ways of God grow dark ;

I watch the rose that withers in the cheek,
 The leaden rings that mark us old and wise ;
 And Time that writes what Pity dares not speak
 Around the fading eyes.

XII.

And ever as Anwyl went the unknown end
 Faded before him, back and back and back
 He saw new empty heavens for ever bend
 Over his endless track ;

And memory, burning with new hopeless fire,
 Showed him how every passing infinite hour
 Made some new Crucifix for the World's Desire
 In some new wayside flower :

He saw what joy and beauty owed to death ;
 How all the world was one great sacrifice
 Of Him, in whom all creatures that draw breath
 Share God's eternal skies ;

How Love is lord of all the world at once ;
 And never bids the encircled spirit roam
 To the circle's bound, beyond the moons and suns,
 But makes each heart its home,

And every home the heart of Space and Time,
 And each and all a heaven if love could reign
 One infinite untranscended heaven sublime
 With God's own joy and pain.

XIII.

Out of the deep, my dream, out of the deep,
 A little child came to him in his sleep
 And led him back to what was Paradise
 Before the years had darkened in his eyes,
 And showed him what he ne'er could lose again—
 The light that once enshrined the child Etain.

Ah, was it Yrma with those radiant eyes
 That came to greet and lead him through the skies ;
 Ay ; all the world was one wide rose-white flame,
 As down the path to meet him Yrma came
 And caught the child up in her arms and cried,
 This is my child that moved in Etain's side,
 Thy child and Etain's : I the unknown ideal
 And she the rich, the incarnate, breathing real
 Are one ; for me thou never canst attain
 But by the love I yield thee for Etain ;
 Even as through Christ thy soul allays its dearth,
 Love's heaven is only compassed upon earth ;
 And by that love, in thine own Etain's eyes
 Thou shalt find all God's untranscended skies.

As of old, as of old, with Etain that day,
 Over the hills, and far away,
 He roamed thro' the fairy forests of fern :
 Two young lovers were they.

And God sighed in the sunset, and the sea
 Grew quieter than the hills : the mystery
 Of ocean, earth and sky was like a word
 Uttered, but all unheard,

Uttered by every wave and cloud and leaf
 With all the immortal glory of mortal grief ;
 And every wave that broke its heart of gold

In music on the rainbow-dazzled shore
 Seemed telling, strangely telling, evermore
 A story that must still remain untold.

Oh, *Once upon a time*, and o'er and o'er
 As aye the *Happy ever after* came
 The enchanted waves lavished their faery lore

And tossed a foam-bow and a rosy flame
 Around the whispers of the creaming foam,
 Till the old rapture with the new sweet name
 Through all the old romance began to roam.

XIV.

And those two lovers only heard
 —Oh, love is a dream that knows no waking—
 Far away, one secret bird,
 Where all the roses breathed one word,
 And every crispel on the beach—

Oh, love is a sea that is ever breaking !—
 Lisped it in a sweeter speech ;
 As hand in hand, by the sunset sea
 That breaks on the shores of mystery,
 They stood in the gates of the City of Pain
 To watch the wild waves flutter and beat
 In roses of white soft light at their feet,
 Roses of delicate music and light,
 Music and moonlight under their feet.
 Crumbling and flashing and softly crashing
 In rainbow colours that dazzle and wane
 And wither and waken and, wild with delight,

Dance and dance to a mystic tune
 And scatter their leaves in a flower-soft rain
 Over the shimmering golden shore
 Between the West and the waking moon,
 Between the sunset and the night ;
 And then they sigh for the years of yore
 And gather their glory together again,
 Petal by petal and gleam by gleam,
 Till, all in one rushing rose-bright stream
 They dazzle back to the deep once more,
 For the dream of the sea is an endless dream,
 And love is a sea that hath no shore,
 And the roses dance as they danced before.

XV.

In other worlds I loved you, long ago :
 Love that hath no beginning hath no end :
 Low to her heart he breathed it, sweet and low ;
 In other worlds I loved you, long ago ;
 This is a word that all the sea-waves know
 And whisper as through the shoreless West they wend
 In other worlds I loved you, long ago :
 Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

XVI.

“ Yet love can die ! ” she murmured once again ;
 For this was in that City by the Sea,
 That old gray City of Pain,
 Built on the shifting shores of Mystery
 And mocked by all the immeasurable main.
 “ Love lives to die ! ”
 Under the deep eternal sky
 His deeper voice caught up that deep refrain ;

“A year ago, and under yonder sun
 Earth had no Heaven to hold our hearts in one !
 For me there was no love, afar or nigh :
 And, O, if love were thus in time begun,
 Love, even our love, in time must surely die.”
 Then memory murmured “No” ;
 And he remembered, a million years ago,
 He saw the sea-waves wistfully westward wend ;
 And heard her voice whispering in their flow
 And calling through the silent sunset-glow,
Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

“Love dies to live !” How wild, how deep the joy
 That knows no death can e'er destroy
 What cannot bear destruction ! By these eyes
 I know that, ere the fashioning of the skies,
 Or ever the sun and moon and stars were made
 I loved you. Sweet, I am no more afraid.

“Love lives to die !”
 Under the deep eternal sky
 Her wild sweet voice caught up that deep refrain :
 There, in that silent City by the Sea,
 Listening the wild-wave music of Infinity,
 There, in that old gray City of mortal pain,
 Their voices mingled in mystic unison
 With that immortal harmony
 Which holds the warring worlds in one.
 Their Voice, one Voice, yet manifold,
 Possessed the seas, the fields, the sky,
 With utterance of the dream that cannot die ;
 Possessed the West’s wild rose and dappled gold,
 And that old secret of the setting sun
 Which, to the glory of Eternity,
 Time, tolling like a distant bell,
 Evermore faints to tell,
 And, ever telling, never yet has told.

One, and yet manifold
 Arose their Voice, oh strangely one again
 With murmurs of the immeasurable main ;
 As, far beyond earth's cloudy bars,
 Their Soul surpassed the sunset and the stars,
 And all the heights and depths of temporal pain,
 Till seas of seraph music round them rolled.

And in that mystic plane
 They felt their mortal years
 Break away as a dream of pain
 Breaks in a stream of tears.

Love, of whom life had birth,
 See now, is death not sweet ?
 Love, is this heaven or earth ?
 Both are beneath thy feet.

Nay, both within thy heart !
 Oh Love, the glory nears ;
 The Gates of Pearl are flung apart,
 The Rose of Heaven appears.

Across the deeps of change,
 Like pangs of visible song,
 What angel-spirits, remote and strange,
 Thrill through the starry throng ?

And oh, what wind that blows
 Over the mystic Tree,
 What whisper of the sacred Rose,
 What murmur of the sapphire Sea,

What dreams that faint and fail
 From harps of burning gold,
 But tell in heaven the sweet old tale
 An earthly sunset told ?

Hark ! like a holy bell
Over that spirit Sea,
Time, in the world it loves so well,
Tolls for Eternity.

Earth calls us once again,
And, through the mystic Gleam,
The gray old City of mortal pain
Dawns on the heavenly dream.

Sweet as the voice of birds
At dawn, the years return,
With little songs and sacred words
Of human hearts that yearn.

The sweet same waves resound
Along our earthly shore ;
But now this earth we lost and found
Is heaven for evermore.

Hark ! how the cosmic choir,
In sea and flower and sun,
Recalls that triumph of desire
Which made all music one :

One universal soul,
Completing joy with pain,
And harmonising with the Whole
The temporal refrain.

Until from hill and plain,
From bud and blossom and tree,
From shadow and shining after rain,
From cloud and clovered bee,

From earth and sea and sky,
From laughter and from tears,
One molten golden harmony
Fulfils the yearning years.

*Love, of whom death had birth,
See now, is life not sweet ?
Love, is this heaven or earth ?
Both are beneath thy feet.*

*In other worlds I loved you, long ago ;
Love that hath no beginning hath no end ;
The sea-waves whisper, low and sweet and low,
In other worlds I loved you, long ago ;
The May-boughs murmur and the roses know
The message that the dawning moon shall send ;
In other worlds I loved you, long ago ;
Love that hath no beginning hath no end.*

THE FOREST OF WILD THYME.

*DEDICATED TO
HELEN, ROSIE, AND BEATRIX.*

PERSONS OF THE TALE.

OURSELVES.	THE HIDEOUS HERMIT.
FATHER.	THE KING OF FAIRY-LAND.
MOTHER.	PEASE-BLOSSOM.
LITTLE BOY BLUE.	MUSTARD-SEED.

Dragons, Fairies, Mammoths, Angels, &c.

APOLOGIA.

ONE more hour to wander free
As Puck on his un-bridled bee
Thro' heather-forests, leagues of bloom,
Our childhood's maze of scent and sun !
Forbear awhile your notes of doom,
Dear critics, give me still this one
Swift hour to hunt the fairy gleam
That flutters thro' the unfettered dream.

It mocks me as it flies, I know :
All too soon the gleam will go ;
Yet I love it and shall love
My dream that brooks no narrower bars
Than bind the darkening heavens above,
My Jack o' Lanthorn of the stars :
Then, I'll follow it no more,
I'll light the lamp : I'll close the door.

PRELUDE.

HUSH ! if you remember how we sailed to old Japan,
Peterkin was with us then, our little brother Peterkin !
Now we've lost him, so they say : I think the tall thin man
Must have come and touched him with his curious
twinkling fan

And taken him away again, our merry little Peterkin ;
He'll be frightened all alone ; we'll find him if we can ;
Come and look for Peterkin, poor little Peterkin.

No one would believe us if we told them what we know,
Or they wouldn't grieve for Peterkin, merry little
Peterkin ;
If they'd only watched us roaming through the streets of
Miyako,
And travelling in a palanquin where parents never go,
And seen the golden gardens where we wandered once
with Peterkin,
And smelt the purple orchards where the cherry-blossoms
blow,
They wouldn't mourn for Peterkin, merry little Peterkin.

Put away your muskets, lay aside the drum,
Hang it by the wooden sword we made for little Peterkin !
He was once our trumpeter, now his bugle's dumb,
Pile your arms beneath it, for the owl light is come,
We'll wander through the roses where we marched of
old with Peterkin,

We'll search the summer sunset where the Hybla beehives
hum,
And—if we meet a fairy there—we'll ask for news of
Peterkin.

He was once our cabin-boy and cooked the sweets for tea ;
And O, we've sailed around the world with laughing
little Peterkin ;
From nursery floor to pantry door we've roamed the
mighty sea,
And come to port below the stairs in distant Caribee,
But wheresoe'er we sailed we took our little lubber
Peterkin,
Because his wide gray eyes believed much more than ours
could see,
And so we liked our Peterkin, our trusty little Peterkin.

Peterkin, Peterkin, I think if you came back
The captain of our host to-day should be the bugler
Peterkin,
And he should lead our smugglers up that steep and
narrow track,
A band of noble brigands, bearing each a mighty pack
Crammed with lace and jewels to the secret cave of
Peterkin,
And he should wear the biggest boots and make his pistol
crack,—
The Spanish cloak, the velvet mask, we'd give them all
to Peterkin.

Come, my brother pirates, I am tired of play ;
Come and look for Peterkin, little brother Peterkin,
Our merry little comrade that the fairies took away,
For people think we've lost him, and when we come to say
Our good-night prayers to mother, if we pray for little
Peterkin
Her eyes are very sorrowful, she turns her head away.
Come and look for Peterkin, merry little Peterkin.

God bless little Peterkin, wherever he may be !

Come and look for Peterkin, lonely little Peterkin :

I wonder if they've taken him again across the sea

From the town of Wonder-Wander and the Amfalula tree

To the land of many marvels where we roamed of old
with Peterkin,

The land of blue pagodas and the flowery fields of tea !

Come and look for Peterkin, poor little Peterkin.

PART. I.—THE SPLENDID SECRET.

Now father stood engaged in talk
With mother on that narrow walk
Between the laurels (where we play
At Red-skins lurking for their prey)
And the gray old wall of roses
Where the Persian kitten dozes
And the sunlight sleeps upon
Crannies of the crumbling stone
—So hot it is you scarce can bear
Your naked hand upon it there,
Though there luxuriating in heat
With a slow and gorgeous beat
White-winged currant-moths display
Their spots of black and gold all day.—.

Well, since we greatly wished to know
Whether we too might some day go
Where little Peterkin had gone
Without one word and all alone,
We crept up through the laurels there
Hoping that we might overhear
The splendid secret, darkly great,
Of Peterkin's mysterious fate ;
And on what high adventure bound
He left our pleasant garden-ground,
Whether for old Japan once more
He voyaged from the dim blue shore,
Or whether he set out to run
By candle-light to Babylon.

We just missed something father said
About a young prince that was dead,
A little warrior that had fought
And failed : how hopes were brought to nought
He said, and mortals made to bow
Before the Juggernaut of Death,
And all the world was darker now,
For Time's gray lips and icy breath
Had blown out all the enchanted lights
That burned in Love's Arabian nights ;
And now he could not understand
Mother's mystic fairy-land,
“ Land of the dead, poor fairy-tale,”
He murmured, and her face grew pale,
And then with great soft shining eyes
She leant to him—she looked so wise—
And, with her cheek against his cheek,
We heard her, ah so softly, speak.

“ Husband, there was a happy day,
Long ago, in love's young May,
When with a wild-flower in your hand
You echoed that dead poet's cry—
'Little flower, but if I could understand!'
And you saw it had roots in the depths of the sky
And there in that smallest bud lay furl'd
The secret and meaning of all the world.”

He shook his head and then he tried
To kiss her, but she only cried
And turned her face away and said,
“ You come between me and my dead !
His soul is near me, night and day,
But you would drive it far away ;
And you shall never kiss me now
Until you lift that brave old brow

Of faith I know so well ; or else
Refute the tale the skylark tells,
Tarnish the glory of that May,
Explain the Smallest Flower away.”
And still he said, “ Poor fairy-tales,
How terribly their starlight pales
Before the solemn sun of truth
That rises o'er the grave of youth ! ”

“ Is heaven a fairy-tale ? ” she said,—
And once again he shook his head ;
And yet we ne'er could understand
Why heaven should *not* be fairy-land,
A part of heaven at least, and why
The thought of it made mother cry,
And why they went away so sad,
And father still quite unforgiven,
For what could children be but glad
To find a fairy-land in heaven ?

And as we talked it o'er we found
Our brains were really spinning round ;
But Dick, our eldest, late returned
From school, by all the lore he'd learned
Declared that we should seek the lost
Smallest Flower at any cost.
For, since within its leaves lay furled
The secret of the whole wide world,
He thought that we might learn therein
The whereabouts of Peterkin ;
And, if we found the Flower, we knew
Father would be forgiven, too ;
And mother's kiss atone for all
The quarrel by the rose-hung wall ;
We knew not how, we knew not why,
But Dick it was who bade us try,

Dick made it all seem plain and clear,
And Dick it is who helps us here
To tell this tale of fairy-land
In words we scarce can understand.
For ere another golden hour
Had passed, our anxious parents found
We'd left the scented garden-ground
To seek—the Smallest Flower.

PART II.—THE FIRST DISCOVERY.

Oh, grown-ups cannot understand
 And grown-ups never will,
How short's the way to fairy-land
 Across the purple hill :
They smile : their smile is very bland,
 Their eyes are wise and chill ;
And yet—at just a child's command—
 The world's an Eden still.

Under the cloudy lilac-tree,
 Out at the garden-gate,
We stole, a little band of three,
 To tempt our fairy fate.
There was no human eye to see,
 No voice to bid us wait ;
The gardener had gone home to tea,
 The hour was very late.

I wonder if you've ever dreamed,
 In summer's noonday sleep,
Of what the thyme and heather seemed
 To ladybirds that creep
Like little crimson shimmering gems
 Between the tiny twisted stems
 Of fairy forests deep ;
And what it looks like as they pass
 Through jungles of the golden grass.

If you could suddenly become
As small a thing as they,
A midget-child, a new Tom Thumb,
A little gauze-winged fay,
Oh then, as through the mighty shades
Of wild thyme woods and violet glades
You groped your forest-way,
How fraught each fragrant bough would be
With dark o'erhanging mystery.

How high the forest aisles would loom,
What wondrous wings would beat
Through gloamings loaded with perfume
In many a rich retreat,
While trees like purple censers bowed
And swung beneath a swooning cloud
Mysteriously sweet,
Where flowers that haunt no mortal clime
Burden the Forest of Wild Thyme.

We'd watched the bats and beetles flit
Through sunset-coloured air
The night that we discovered it
And all the heavens were bare :
We'd seen the colours melt and pass
Like silent ghosts across the grass
To sleep—our hearts knew where ;
And so we rose, and hand in hand
We sought the gates of fairy-land.

For Peterkin, oh Peterkin,
The cry was in our ears,
A fairy clamour, clear and thin
From lands beyond the years ;
A wistful note, a dying fall
As of the fairy bugle-call
Some dreamful changeling hears,
And pines within his mortal home
Once more through fairy-land to roam.

We left behind the pleasant row
Of cottage window-panes,
The village inn's red-curtained glow,
The lovers in the lanes ;
And stout of heart and strong of will
We climbed the purple perfumed hill,
And hummed the sweet refrains
Of fairy tunes the tall thin man
Taught us of old in Old Japan.

So by the tall wide-barred church-gate
Through which we all could pass
We came to where that curious plate,
That foolish plate of brass,
Said Peterkin was fast asleep
Beneath a cold and ugly heap
Of earth and stones and grass.
It was a splendid place for play,
That churchyard, on a summer's day ;

A splendid place for hide-and-seek
Between the gray old stones ;
Where even grown-ups used to speak
In awestruck whispering tones ;
And here and there the grass ran wild
In jungles for the creeping child,
And there were elfin zones
Of twisted flowers and words in rhyme
And great sweet cushions of wild thyme.

So in a wild thyme snuggery there
We stayed awhile to rest ;
A bell was calling folk to prayer :
One star was in the West :
The cottage lights grew far away,
The whole sky seemed to waver and sway
Above our fragrant nest ;
And from a distant dreamland moon
Once more we heard that fairy tune :

Why, mother once had sung it us
When, ere we went to bed,
She told the tale of Pyramus,
How Thisbe found him dead
And mourned his eyes as green as leeks.
His cherry nose, his cowslip cheeks.

That tune would oft around us float
Since on a golden noon
We saw the play that Shakespeare wrote
Of Lion, Wall, and Moon;
Ah, hark—the ancient fairy theme—
Following darkness like a dream!

The very song Will Shakespeare sang,
The music that through Sherwood rang
And Arden and that forest glade
Where Hermie and Lysander strayed,
And Puck cried out with impish glee,
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

Though the masquerade was mute
Of Quince and Snout and Snug and Flute,
And Bottom with his donkey's head
Decked with roses, white and red,
Though the fairies had forsaken
Sherwood now and faintly shaken
The forest-scents from off their feet,
Yet from some divine retreat
Came the music, sweet and clear,
To hang upon the raptured ear
With the free unfettered sway
Of blossoms in the moon of May.
Hark! the luscious fluttering
Of flower-soft words that kiss and cling,
And part again with sweet farewells,
And rhyme and chime like fairy-bells.

*"I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine."*

Out of the undiscovered land
 So sweetly rang the song,
 We dreamed we wandered, hand in hand,
 The fragrant aisles along,
 Where long ago had gone to dwell
 In some enchanted distant dell
 The outlawed fairy throng
 When out of Sherwood's wildest glen
 They sank, forsaking mortal men.

And as we dreamed, the shadowy ground
 Seemed gradually to swell ;
 And a strange forest rose around,
 But how—we could not tell—
 Purple against a rose-red sky
 The big boughs brooded silently :
 Far off we heard a bell ;
 And, suddenly, a great red light
 Smouldered before our startled sight.

Then came a cry, a fiercer flash,
 And down between the trees
 We saw great crimson figures crash,
 Wild-eyed monstrosities ;
 Great dragon shapes that breathed a flame
 From roaring nostrils as they came :
 We sank upon our knees ;
 And looming o'er us, ten yards high,
 Like battleships they thundered by.

And then, as down that mighty dell
 We followed, faint with fear,
 We understood the tolling bell
 That called the monsters there ;

For right in front we saw a house
 Woven of wild mysterious boughs
 Bursting out everywhere
 In crimson flames, and with a shout
 The monsters rushed to put it out.

And, in a flash, the truth was ours ;
 And there we knew—we knew—
 The meaning of those trees like flowers,
 Those boughs of rose and blue,
 And from the world we'd left above
 A voice came crooning like a dove
 To prove the dream was true :
 And this—we knew it by the rhyme
 Must be—the Forest of Wild Thyme,

For out of the mystical rose-red dome
 Of heaven the voice came murmuring down :
Oh, Ladybird, Ladybird, fly away home ;
Your house is on fire and your children are gone.

We knew, we knew it by the rhyme,
 Though *we* seemed, after all,
 No tinier, yet the sweet wild thyme
 Tower'd like a forest tall
 All round us ; oh, we knew not how,
 And yet—we knew those monsters now :
 Our dream's divine recall
 Had dwarfed us, as with magic words ;
 The dragons were but ladybirds !

And all around us as we gazed,
 Half glad, half frightened, all amazed,
 The scented clouds of purple smoke
 In lurid gleams of crimson broke ;
 And o'er our heads the huge black trees
 Obscured the sky's red mysteries ;

While here and there gigantic wings
Beat o'er us, and great scaly things
Fold over monstrous leathern fold
Out of the smouldering copses rolled ;
And eyes like blood-red pits of flame
From many a forest-cavern came
To glare across the blazing glade,
Till, with the sudden thought dismayed,
We wondered if we e'er should find
The mortal home we left behind :
Fear clutched us in a grisly grasp,
We gave one wild and white-lipped gasp,
Then turned and ran, with streaming hair,
Away, away, and anywhere !

And hurry-skurry, heart and heel and hand, we tore along,
And still our flying feet kept time and pattered on for
Peterkin,
For Peterkin, oh Peterkin, it made a kind of song
To prove the road was right although it seemed so dark
and wrong,
As through the desperate woods we plunged and
ploughed for little Peterkin,
Where many a hidden jungle-beast made noises like a gong
That rolled and roared and rumbled as we rushed along
to Peterkin.

Peterkin, Peterkin, if you could only hear
And answer us ; one little word from little lonely
Peterkin
To take and comfort father, he is sitting in his chair
In the library : he's listening for your footstep on the stair
And your patter down the passage, he can only think
of Peterkin :
Come back, come back to father, for to-day he'd let us tear
His newest book to make a paper-boat for little Peterkin.

PART III.—THE HIDEOUS HERMIT.

AH, what wonders round us rose
When we dared to pause and look,
Curious things that seemed all toes,
Goblins from a picture-book ;
Ants like witches, four feet high,
Waving all their skinny arms,
Glared at us and wandered by,
Muttering their ancestral charms.

Stately forms in green and gold
Armour strutted through the glades,
Just as Hamlet's ghost, we're told,
Mooned among the midnight shades :
Once a sort of devil came
Scattering broken trees about,
Winged with leather, eyed with flame,—
He was but a moth, no doubt.

Here and there, above us climb
Feathery clumps of palm on high :
Those were ferns, of course, but some
Really seemed to touch the sky ;
Yes ; and down one fragrant glade,
Listening as we onward stole,
Half delighted, half afraid,
Dong, we heard the hare-bells toll !

Something told us what that gleam
 Down the glen was brooding o'er;
 Something told us in a dream
 What the bells were tolling for!
 Something told us there was fear,
 Horror, peril, on our way!
 Was it far or was it near?
Near, we heard the night-wind say.

Toll, the music reeled and pealed
 Through the vast and sombre trees,
 Where a rosy light revealed
 Dimmer, sweeter mysteries;
 And, like petals of the rose,
 Fairy fans in beauty beat,
 Light in light—ah, what were those
 Rhymes we heard the night repeat?

Toll, a dream within a dream,
 Up an aisle of rose and blue,
 Up the music's perfumed stream
 Came the words, and then we knew,
 Knew that in that distant glen
 Once again the case was tried,
 Hark!—*Who killed Cock Robin, then?*
 And a tiny voice replied,
 “*I
killed
Cock
Robin!*”

“*I!* And who are *You*, sir, pray?”
 Growled a voice that froze our marrow
 “Who!” we heard the murderer say,
 “Lord, sir, I'm the famous Sparrow,
 And this 'ere's my bow and arrow!
*I
killed
Cock
Robin!*”

Then, with one great indrawn breath,
Such a sighin' and a sobbin'
Rose all round us for the death
Of poor, poor Cock Robin,
Oh, we couldn't bear to wait
Even to hear the murderer's fate,
Which we'd often wished to know
Sitting in the fireside glow
And with hot revengeful looks
Searched for in the nursery-books ;
For the Robin and the Wren
Are such friends to mortal men,
Such dear friends to mortal men !

Toll ; and through the woods once more
Stole we, drenched with fragrant dew :
Toll ; the hare-bell's burden bore
Deeper meanings than we knew :
Still it told us there was fear,
Horror, peril on our way !
Was it far or was it near ?
Near, we heard the night-wind say !

Near ; and once or twice we saw
Something like a monstrous eye,
Something like a hideous claw
Steal between us and the sky :
Still we hummed a dauntless tune
Trying to think such things might be
Glimpses of the fairy moon
Hiding in some hairy tree.

Yet around us as we went
Through the glades of rose and blue
Sweetness with the horror blent
Wonder-wild in scent and hue :

Here Aladdin's cavern yawned,
 Jewelled thick with gorgeous dyes ;
 There a head of clover dawned
 Like a cloud in eastern skies.

Hills of topaz, lakes of dew,
 Fairy cliffs of crystal sheen
 Passed we ; and the forest's blue
 Sea of branches tossed between :
 Once we saw a gryphon make
 One soft iris as it passed
 Like the curving meteor's wake
 O'er the forest, far and fast.

Winged with purple, breathing flame,
 Crimson-eyed we saw him go,
 Where—ah ! could it be the same
 Cockchafer we used to know ?—
 Valley-lilies overhead,
 High aloof in clustered spray,
 Far through heaven their splendour spread,
 Glimmering like the Milky Way.

Mammoths father calls “extinct,”
 Creatures that the cave-men feared,
 Through that forest walked and blinked,
 Through that jungle crawled and leered
 Beasts no Nimrod ever knew,
 Woolly bears of black and red ;
 Crocodiles, we wondered who
 Ever dared to see *them* fed.

Were they lizards ? If they were,
 They could swallow *us* with ease ;
 But they slumbered quietly there
 In among the mighty trees ;

Red and silver, blue and green,
Played the moonlight on their scales ;
Golden eyes they had, and lean
Crookéd legs with cruel nails.

Yet again, oh, faint and far,
Came the shadow of a cry,
Like the calling of a star
To its brother in the sky ;
Like an echo in a cave
Where young mermen sound their shells
Like the wind across a grave
Bright with scent of lily-bells.

Like a fairy hunter's horn
Sounding in some purple glen
Sweet revelly to the morn
And the fairy quest again :
Then, all round it surged a song
We could never understand
Though it lingered with us long,
And it seemed so sad and grand.

SONG.

*Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn,
Summon the day of deliverance in :
We are weary of bearing the burden of scorn
As we yearn for the home that we never shall win ;
For here there is weeping and sorrow and sin,
And the poor and the weak are a spoil for the strong !
Ah ! when shall the song of the ransomed begin ?
The world is grown weary with waiting so long.*

*Little Boy Blue, you are gallant and brave,
 There was never a doubt in those clear bright eyes ;
 Come, challenge the grim dark Gates of the Grave
 As the skylark sings to those infinite skies !
 This world is a dream, say the old and the wise,
 And its rainbows arise o'er the false and the true ;
 But the mists of the morning are made of our sighs,—
 Ah, shatter them, scatter them, Little Boy Blue !*

*Little Boy Blue, if the child-heart knows,
 Sound but a note as a little one may ;
 And the thorns of the desert shall bloom with the rose,
 And the Healer shall wipe all tears away ;
 Little Boy Blue, we are all astray,
 The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn,
 Ah, set the world right, as a little one may ;
 Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn !*

Yes ; and there between the trees
 Circled with a misty gleam
 Like the light a mourner sees
 Round an angel in a dream ;
 Was it he ? oh, brave and slim,
 Straight and clad in æry blue,
 Lifting to his lips the dim
 Golden horn ? We never knew !

Never ; for a witch's hair
 Flooded all the moonlit sky,
 And he vanished, then and there,
 In the twinkling of an eye :
 Just as either boyish cheek
 Puffed to set the world aright,
 Ere the golden horn could speak
 Round him flowed the purple night,

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At last we came to a round black road
That tunnelled through the woods and showed,
Or so we thought, a good clear way
Back to the upper lands of day ;
Great silken cables overhead
In many a mighty mesh were spread
Netting the rounded arch, no doubt
To keep the weight of leafage out.
And, as the tunnel narrowed down,
So thick and close the chords had grown
No leaf could through their meshes stray,
And the faint moonlight died away ;
Only a strange grey glimmer shone
To guide our weary footsteps on,
Until, tired out, we stood before
The end, a great grey silken door.

Then from out a weird old wicket, overgrown with shaggy
hair
Like a weird and wicked eyebrow round a weird and wicked
eye,
Two great eyeballs and a beard
For one ghastly moment peered
At our faces with a sudden stealthy stare :
Then the door was opened wide,
And a hideous hermit cried
With a shy and soothing smile from out his lair,
Won't you walk into my parlour ? I can make you cosy there !

And we couldn't quite remember where we'd heard that
phrase before,
As the great grey-bearded ogre stood beside his open
door ;
But an echo seemed to answer from a land beyond the
sky—
Won't you walk into my parlour ? said the spider to the fly !

Then we looked a little closer at the ogre as he stood
With his great red eyeballs glowing like two torches in a
wood,
And his mighty speckled belly and his dreadful clutching
claws,
And his nose—a horny parrot's beak, his whiskers and his
jaws ;
Yet he seemed so sympathetic, and we saw two tears
descend,
As he murmured “I'm so ugly, but I've lost my dearest
friend !
I tell you most lymphatic'ly, I've yearnings in my soul,”—
And right along his parrot's beak we saw the teardrops
roll ;
*He's an arrant sentimental*ist, we heard a distant sigh,
Won't you weep upon my bosom ? said the spider to the fly.

“If you'd dreamed my dreams of beauty, if you'd seen my
works of art,
If you'd felt the cruel hunger that is gnawing at my
heart,
And the grief that never leaves me and the love I can't
forget,
(For I loved with all the letters in the Chinese alphabet !)
Oh, you'd all come in to comfort me : you ought to help
the weak ;
And I'm full of melting moments ; and—I—know—the—
thing—you—seek !”
And the haunting echo answered, *Well, I'm sure you ought
to try ;*
There's a duty to one's neighbour, said the spider to the fly.

So we walked into his parlour
Though a gleam was in his eye ;
And it *was* the prettiest parlour
That ever we did spy !

But we saw by the uncertain
 Misty light, shot through with gleams
 Of many a silken curtain
 i Broidered o'er with dreadful dreams,
 That he locked the door behind us! So we stood with
 bated breath
 In a silence deep as death.

There were scarlet gleams and crimson
 In the curious foggy gray,
 Like the blood-red light that swims on
 Old canals at fall of day,
 Where the smoke of some great city loops and droops in
 gorgeous veils
 Round the heavy purple barges' tawny sails.

Were those creatures gagged and muffled
 See—there—by that severed head?
 Was it but a breeze that ruffled
 Those dark curtains, splashed with red,
 Ruffled the dark figures on them, made them moan like
 things in pain?
 How we wished that we were safe at home again.

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“Oh, we want to hear of Peterkin; good sir, you say you
 know;
 Won’t you tell us, won’t you put us in the way we want to
 go?”
 So we pleaded, for he seemed so very full of sighs and
 tears
 That we couldn’t doubt his kindness, and we smothered
 all our fears;
 But he said, “You must be crazy if you come to me for
 help;
 Why should I desire to send you to your horrid little
 whelp?”

And again the foolish echo made a far away reply,
Oh, don't come to me for comfort,
Pray don't look to me for comfort,
Heavens! you mustn't be so selfish, said the spider to the fly.

"Still, when the King of Scotland, so to speak, was in a hole,
 He was aided by my brother : it's a story to console
 The convict on the treadmill and the infant with a sum,
 For it teaches you to try again until your kingdom's come !
 The monarch dawdled in that hole for centuries of time
 Until my own twin-brother rose and showed him how to climb :
 He showed him how to swing and sway upon a tiny thread
 Across a mighty precipice, and light upon his head
 Without a single fracture and without a single pain
 If he only did it frequently and tried and tried again :"
 And once again the whisper like a moral wandered by,
Perseverance is a virtue, said the spider to the fly.

Then he moaned, "My heart is hungry ; but I fear I cannot eat,
 (Of course I speak entirely now of spiritual meat !)
 For I only fed an hour ago, but if we calmly sat
 While I told you all my troubles in a confidential chat
 It would give me *such* an appetite to hear you sympathise,
 And I should sleep the better—see, the tears are in my eyes !
 Dead yearnings are such dreadful things, let's keep 'em all alive,—
 Let's sit and talk awhile, my dears ; we'll dine, I think, at five."
 And he brought his chair beside us in his most engaging style,
 And began to tell his story with a melancholy smile.—

" You remember Miss Muffet
 Who sat on a tuffet
 Partaking of curds and whey ;
 Well, *I* am the spider
 Who sat down beside her
 And frightened Miss Muffet away !

There was nothing against her !
 An elderly spinster
 Were such a grammatical mate
 For a spider and spinner,
 I swore I would win her,
 I knew I had met with my fate !

That love was the purest
 And strongest and surest
 I'd felt since my first thread was spun ?
 I know I'm a bogey,
 But *she's* an old fogey,
 So why in the world did she run ?

When Bruce was in trouble,
 A spider, my double,
 Encouraged him greatly, they say !
 Now, *why* should the spider
 Who sat down beside her
 Have frightened Miss Muffet away ? "

He seemed to have much more to tell,
 But we could scarce be listening well,
 Although we tried with all our might
 To look attentive and polite ;
 For still afar we heard the thin
 Clear fairy-call to Peterkin ;
 Clear as a skylark's mounting song
 It drew our wandering thoughts along ;

Afar, it seemed, yet, ah, so nigh,
Deep in our dreams it scaled the sky,
In captive dreams that brooked no bars
It touched the love that moves the stars,
And with sweet music's golden tether
It bound our hearts and heaven together.

SONG.

*Wake, arise, the lake, the skies
Fade into the faery day ;
Come and sing before our king,
Heed not Time, the dotard gray ;
Time has given his crown to heaven—
Ah, how long ? Awake, away !*

Then, as the Hermit rambled on
In one long listless monotone,
We heard a wild and mournful groan
Come rumbling down the tunnelled way ;
A voice, an awful mournful bray,
Singing some old funereal lay ;
Then solemn footsteps, muffled, dull,
Approached as if they trod on wool.
And as they nearer, nearer drew,
We saw our Host was listening too !

His bulging eyes began to glow
Like great red match-heads rubbed at night,
And then he stole with a grim "O-ho!"
To that gray old wicket where, out of sight,
Blandly rubbing his hands and humming,
He could see, at one glance, whatever was coming

He had never been so jubilant or frolicsome before,
As he scurried on his cruel hairy crutches to the door ;
 And flung it open wide
 And most hospitably cried,
“ Won’t you walk into my parlour ? I’ve some little friends
 to tea,—
They’ll be highly entertaining to a man of sympathy,
 Such as you yourself must be ! ”

Then the man, for so he seemed,
 (Doubtless one who’d lost his way
 And was dwarfed as we had been !)
 In his ancient suit of black,
 Black upon the verge of green,
 Entered like a ghost that dreamed
 Sadly of some bygone day ;
 And he never ceased to sing
 In that awful mournful bray.

The door closed behind his back ;
 He walked round us in a ring,
 And we hoped that he might free us,
 But his tears appeared to blind him,
 For he didn’t seem to see us,
 And the Hermit crept behind him
 Like a cat about to spring.

And the song he sang was this ;
 And his nose looked very grand
As he sang it, with a bliss
 Which we could not understand ;
For his voice was very sad,
 While his nose was proud and glad.

*Rain, April, rain, thy sunny, sunny tears !
Through the black boughs the robe of Spring appears,
Yet, for the ghosts of all the bygone years,
Rain, April, rain.*

*Rain, April, rain ; the rose will soon be glad ;
Spring will rejoice, a Spring I, too, have had ;
A little while, till I no more be sad,*

Rain, April, rain.

And then the spider sprang
Before we could breathe or speak,
And one great scream out-rang
As the terrible horny beak
Crunched into the Sad Man's head,
And the terrible hairy claws
Clutched him around his middle ;
And he opened his lantern-jaws,
And he gave one twist, one twiddle,
One kick, and his sorrow was dead.

And there, as he sucked his bleeding prey,
The spider leered at us—" You will do,
My sweet little dears, for another day ;
But this is the sort I like ; huh ! huh ! "

And there we stood, in frozen fear,
Whiter than death,
With bated breath ;
And lo ! as we thought of Peterkin,
Father and home and Peterkin,
Once more that music clear and thin,
Clear as a skylark's mounting song,
But nearer now, more sweet, more strong,
Drew all our wandering thoughts along,
Until it seemed, a mystic sea
Of hidden delight and harmony
Began to ripple and rise all round
The prison where our hearts lay bound ;
And from sweet heaven's most rosy rim
There swelled a distant marching hymn

Which made the hideous Hermit pause
And listen with lank down-dropt jaws,
Till, with great bulging eyes of fear,
He sought the wicket again to peer
Along the tunnel, as like sweet rain
We heard the still approaching strain,
And, under it, the rhythmic beat
Of multitudinous marching feet.
Nearer, nearer, they rippled and rang,
And this was the marching song they sang :—

SONG.

*A fairy band are we
In fairy-land :
Singing march we, hand in hand ;
Singing, singing all day long :
(Some folk never heard a fairy-song !)*

*Singing, singing,
When the merry thrush is swinging
On a springing spray ;
Or when the witch that lives in gloomy caves
And creeps by night among the graves
Calls a cloud across the day ;
Cease we never our fairy song,
March we ever, along, along,
Down the dale, or up the hill,
Singing, singing still.*

And suddenly the Hermit turned and ran with all his might
Through the back-door of his parlour as we thought of little Peterkin ;
And the great grey roof was shattered by a shower of rosy light,

And the spider-house went floating, torn and tattered
through the night
In a flight of prismatic streamers, as a shout went up for
Peterkin ;
And lo, the glistening fairy-host stood there arrayed for
fight,
In arms of rose and green and gold, to lead us on to
Peterkin.

And all around us, rippling like a pearl and opal sea,
The host of fairy faces winked a kindly hint of Peterkin ;
And all around the rosy glade a laugh of fairy glee
Watched spider-streamers floating up from fragrant tree to
tree
Till the moonlight caught the gossamers and, oh we
wished for Peterkin !
Each rope became a rainbow ; but it made us ache to see
Such a fairy forest-pomp without explaining it to
Peterkin.

'Then all the glittering crowd
With a courtly gesture bowed
Like a rosy jewelled cloud
Round a flame,
As the King of Fairy-land,
Very dignified and grand,
Stepped forward to demand
Whence we came.

He'd a cloak of gold and green
Such as caterpillars spin,
For the fairy ways, I ween,
Are very frugal ;
He'd a bow that he had borne
Since the crimson Eden morn,
And a honeysuckle horn
For his bugle.

So we told our tale of faëry to the King of Fairy-land,
And asked if he could let us know the latest news of
Peterkin;
And he turned him with a courtly smile and waved his
jewelled wand
And cried, *Pease-blossom, Mustard-seed!* You know the
old command;
Well; these are little children; you must lead them on to
Peterkin.
Then he knelt, the King of Faëry knelt; his eyes were
great and grand
As he took our hands and kissed them, saying,
Father loves your Peterkin!

So out they sprang, on either side,
A light fantastic fairy guide,
To lead us to the land unknown
Where little Peterkin was gone;
And, as we went with timid pace,
We saw that every fairy face
In all that moonlit host was wet
With tears: we never shall forget
The mystic hush that seemed to fade
Away like sound, as down the glade
We passed beyond their zone of light.
Then through the forest's purple night
We trotted, at a pleasant speed,
With gay Pease-blossom and Mustard-seed.

PART IV.—PEASE-BLOSSOM AND
MUSTARD-SEED.

SHYLY we surveyed our guides
As through the gloomy woods we went
In the light that the straggling moonbeams lent :

We envied them their easy strides !
Pease-blossom in his crimson cap

And delicate suit of rose-leaf green,
His crimson sash and his jewelled dagger,
Strutted along with an elegant swagger
Which showed that he didn't care one rap

For anything less than a Fairy Queen :
His eyes were deep like the eyes of a poet,

Although his crisp and curly hair
Certainly didn't seem to show it !

While Mustard-seed was a devil-may-care
Epigrammatic and pungent fellow
Clad in a splendid suit of yellow,
With emerald stars on his glittering breast

And eyes that shone with a diamond light :
They made you feel sure it would always be best
To tell him the truth : he was not perhaps *quite*
So polite as Pease-blossom, but then who could be
Quite such a debonair fairy as he ?

We never could tell you one half that we heard
And saw on that journey. For instance, a bird

Ten times as big as an elephant stood
By the side of a nest like a great thick wood :
The clouds in glimmering wreaths were spread
Behind its vast and shadowy head
Which rolled at us trembling below. (Its eyes
Were like great black moons in those pearl-pale skies.)
And we feared he might take us, perhaps, for a worm.

But he ruffled his breast with the sound of a storm,
And snuggled his head with a careless disdain
Under his huge hunched wing again ;
And Mustard-seed said, as we stole thro' the dark,
There was nothing to fear : it was only a Lark !

And so he cheered the way along
With many a neat little epigram,
While dear Pease-blossom before him swam
On a billow of lovely moonlit song,
Telling us why they had left their home
In Sherwood, and had hither come
To dwell in this magical scented clime,
This dim old Forest of sweet Wild Thyme.

“ Men toil,” he said, “ from morn till night
With bleeding hands and blinded sight
For gold, more gold ! They have betrayed
The trust that in their souls was laid ;
Their fairy birthright they have sold
For little disks of mortal gold ;
And now they cannot even see
The gold upon the greenwood tree,
The wealth of coloured lights that pass
In soft gradations through the grass,
The riches of the love untold
That wakes the day from gray to gold ;
And howsoe'er the moonlight weaves
Magic webs among the leaves

Englishmen care little now
For elves beneath the hawthorn bough :
Nor if Robin should return
Dare they of an outlaw learn ;
For them the Smallest Flower is furled,
Mute is the music of the world ;
And unbelief has driven away
Beauty from the blossomed spray.

Then Mustard-seed with diamond eyes
Taught us to be laughter-wise,
And he show'd us how that Time
Was much less powerful than a rhyme ;
And that Space was but a dream ;
“ For look,” he said, with eyes agleam,
“ Now you are become so small
You think the Thyme a forest tall ;
But underneath your feet you see
A world of wilder mystery
Where, if you were smaller yet,
You would just as soon forget
This forest, which you’d leave above
As you have left the home you love !
For, since the Thyme you used to know
Seems a forest here below,
What if you should sink again
And find there stretched a mighty plain
Between each grass-blade and the next ?
You’d think till you were quite perplexed !
Especially if all the flowers
That lit the sweet Thyme-forest bowers
Were in that wild transcendent change
Turned to Temples, great and strange,
With many a pillared portal high
And domes that swelled against the sky !
How foolish, then, you will agree,
Are those who think that all must see

The world alike, or those who scorn
Another who, perchance, was born
Where—in a different dream from theirs—
What they call sins to him are prayers !
We cannot judge ; we cannot know ;
All things mingle ; all things flow ;
There's only one thing constant here—
Love—that untranscended sphere :
Love, that while all ages run
Holds the wheeling worlds in one ;
Love, that, as your sages tell,
Soars to heaven and sinks to hell.”

Even as he spoke, we seemed to grow
Smaller, the Thyme trees seemed to go
Farther away from us : new dreams
Flashed out on us with mystic gleams
Of mighty Temple-domes : deep awe
Held us all breathless as we saw
A carven portal glimmering out
Between new flowers that put to rout
Our other fancies : in sweet fear
We tiptoed past, and seemed to hear
A sound of singing from within
That told our souls of Peterkin :
Our thoughts of *him* were still the same
Howe'er the shadows went and came !
So, on we wandered, hand in hand,
And all the world was fairy-land.

• • • • •

Then we came through a glittering crystal grot
By a path like a pale moonbeam,
And a broad blue bridge of Forget-me-not
Over a shimmering stream,
To where, through the deep blue dusk, a gleam
Rose like the soul of the setting sun ;

A sunset breaking through the earth.
A crimson sea of the poppies of dream,
Deep as the sleep that gave them birth
In the night where all earthly dreams are done.

And then, like a pearl-pale porch of the moon,
Faint and sweet as a starlit shrine,
Over the gloom
Of the crimson bloom
We saw the Gates of Ivory shine ;
And, lulled and lured by the lullaby tune
Of the cradling airs that drowsily creep
From blossom to blossom, and lazily croon
Through the heart of the midnight's mystic noon,
We came to the Gates of the City of Sleep.

Faint and sweet as a lily's repose
On the broad black breast of a midnight lake,
The City delighted the cradling night :
Like a straggling palace of cloud it rose ;
The towers were crowned with a crystal light
Like the starry crown of a white snowflake
As they pierced in a wild white pinnacled crowd,
Through the dusky wreaths of enchanted cloud
That swirled all round like a witch's hair.

And we heard, as the sound of a great sea sighing,
The sigh of the sleepless world of care ;
And we saw strange shadowy figures flying
Up to the Ivory Gates and beating
With pale hands, long and famished and thin ;
Like blinded birds we saw them dash
Against the cruelly gleaming wall :
We heard them wearily moan and call
With sharp starved lips for ever entreating
The pale doorkeeper to let them in.

And still, as they beat, again and again,
We saw on the moon-pale lintels a splash
Of crimson blood like a poppy-stain
Or a wild red rose from the gardens of pain
That sigh all night like a ghostly sea
From the City of Sleep to Gethsemane.

And lo, as we neared that mighty crowd
An old blind man came, crying aloud
To greet us, as once the blind man cried
In the Bible picture—you know we tried
To paint that print, with its Eastern sun ;
But the reds and the yellows *would* mix and run,
And the blue of the sky made a horrible mess
Right over the edge of the Lord's white dress.

And the old blind man, just as though he had eyes,
Came straight to meet us ; and all the cries
Of the crowd were hushed ; and a strange sweet calm
Stole through the air like a breath of the balm
That was wafted abroad from the Forest of Thyme
(For it rolled all round that curious clime
With its magical clouds of perfumed trees).
And the blind man cried, “Our help is at hand,
Oh, brothers, remember the old command,
Remember the frankincense and myrrh,
Make way, make way for those little ones there ;
Make way, make way, I have seen them afar
Under a great white Eastern star ;
For I am the mad blind man who sees !”
Then he whispered, softly—*Of such as these ;*
And through the hush of the cloven crowd
We passed to the gates of the City, and there
Our fairy heralds cried aloud—
Open your Gates ; don't stand and stare ;
These are the Children for whom our King
Made all the star-worlds dance in a ring !

And lo, like a sorrow that melts from the heart
In tears, the slow gates melted apart ;
And into the City we passed like a dream ;
And then, in one splendid marching stream
The whole of that host came following through.

We were only children, just like you ;
Children, ah, but we felt so grand
As we led them—although we could understand
Nothing at all of the wonderful song
That rose all round as we marched along

SONG.

*You that have seen how the world and its glory
Change and grow old like the love of a friend ;
You that have come to the end of the story,
You that were tired ere you came to the end ;
You that are weary of laughter and sorrow,
Pain and pleasure, labour and sin,
Sick of the midnight and dreading the morrow,
Ah, come in ; come in.*

*You that are bearing the load of the ages ;
You that have loved overmuch and too late ;
You that confute all the saws of the sages ;
You that served only because you must wait,
Knowing your work was a wasted endeavour ;
You that have lost and yet triumphed therein,
Add loss to your losses and triumph for ever ;
Ah, come in ; come in.*

And we knew as we went up that twisted street,
With its violet shadows and pearl-pale walls,
We were coming to Something strange and sweet,
For the dim air echoed with elfin calls ;

And, far away, in the heart of the City,
A murmur of laughter and revelry rose,—
A sound that was faint as the smile of Pity,
And sweet as a swan-song's golden close.

And then, once more, as we marched along,
There surged all round us that wonderful song ;
And it swung to the tramp of our marching feet ;
But ah, it was tenderer now and so sweet
That it made our eyes grow wet and blind,
And the whole wide-world seem mother-kind,
Folding us round with a gentle embrace,
And pressing our souls to her soft sweet face.

SONG.

*Dreams—dreams—ah, the memory blinding us,
Blinding our eyes to the way that we go ;
Till the new sorrow come, once more reminding us
Blindly of kind hearts, ours long ago :
Mother-mine, whisper we, yours was the love for me !
Still, though our paths lie lone and apart,
Yours is the true love, shining above for me,
Yours are the kind eyes, hurting my heart.*

*Dreams—dreams—ah, how shall we sing of them,
Dreams that we loved with our head on her breast :
Dreams—dreams—and the cradle-sweet swing of them ;
Ay, for her voice was the sound we loved best :
Can we remember at all or, forgetting it,
Can we recall for a moment the gleam
Of our childhood's delight and the wonder begetting it,
Wonder awakened in dreams of a dream ?*

And, once again, from the heart of the City
 A murmur of tenderer laughter rose,
 A sound that was faint as the smile of Pity,
 And sweet as a swan-song's golden close ;
 And it seemed as if some wonderful Fair
 Were charming the night of the City of Dreams,
 For, over the mystical din out there,
 The clouds were litten with flickering gleams,
 And a roseate light like the day's first flush
 Quivered and beat on the towers above,
 And we heard through the curious crooning hush
 An elfin song that we used to love.

Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn . . .
 And the soft wind blew it the other way ;
 And all that we heard was—*Cow's in the corn* ;
 But we never heard anything half so gay !
 And ever we seemed to be drawing nearer
 That mystical roseate smoke-wreathed glare,
 And the curious music grew louder and clearer,
 Till *Mustard-Seed* said, “We are lucky, you see,
 We've arrived at a time of festivity !”
 And so to the end of the street we came,
 And turned a corner, and—there we were,
 In a place that glowed like the dawn of day,
 A crowded clamouring City square
 Like the cloudy heart of an opal, aflame
 With the lights of a great Dream-Fair :
 Thousands of children were gathered there,
 Thousands of old men, weary and gray,
 And the shouts of the showmen filled the air—
 This way ! This way ! This way !

And *See-Saw* ; *Margery Daw* ; we heard a rollicking shout,
 As the swing-boats hurtled over our heads to the tune of
 the roundabout ;

And *Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn*, we heard
 the showmen cry,
 And *Dickory Dock I'm as good as a clock*, we heard the
 swings reply.

This way, this way to your Heart's Desire ;
 Come, cast your burdens down ;
 And the pauper shall mount his throne in the skies,
 And the king be rid of his crown :
 And souls that were dead shall be fed with fire
 From the fount of their ancient pain,
 And your lost love come with the light in her eyes
 Back to your heart again.

Ah, here be sure she shall never prove
 Less kind than her eyes were bright ;
 This way, this way to your old lost love,
 You shall kiss her lips to-night ;
 This way for the smile of a dead man's face
 And the grip of a brother's hand,
 This way to your childhood's heart of grace
 And your home in Fairy-land.

*Dickory Dock, I'm as good as a clock, d'you hear my swivels
 chime ?*
 To and fro as I come and go, I keep eternal time.
 O, little Bo-peep, if you've lost your sheep and don't know
 where to find 'em,
 Leave 'em alone and they'll come home, and carry their
 tails behind 'em.

And *See-Saw ; Margery Daw* ; there came the chorussing
 shout,
 As the swing-boats answered the roaring tune of the
 rollicking roundabout ;
 Dickory, dickory, dickory, dock, d'you hear my swivels
 chime ?
 Swing ; swing ; you're as good as a king if you keep eternal
 time.

Then we saw that the tunes of the world were one ;
And the metre that guided the rhythmic sun
Was at one, like the ebb and the flow of the sea,
With the tunes that we learned at our mother's knee ;
The beat of the horse-hoofs that carried us down
To see the fine Lady of Banbury Town ;
And so, by the rhymes that we knew, we could tell
Without knowing the others—that all was well.

And then, our brains began to spin ;
For it seemed as if that mighty din
Were no less than the cries of the poets and sages
Of all the nations in all the ages ;
And, if they could only beat out the whole
Of their music together, the guerdon and goal
Of the world would be reached with one mighty shout,
And the dark dread secret of Time be out ;
And nearer, nearer they seemed to climb,
 And madder and merrier rose the song,
And the swings and the see-saws marked the time ;
 For this was the maddest and merriest throng
That ever was met on a holy-day
To dance the dust of the world away ;
And madder and merrier, round and round
The whirligigs whirled to the whirling sound,
Till it seemed that the mad song burst its bars
And mixed with the song of the whirling stars,
The song that the rhythmic Time-Tides tell
To seraphs in Heaven and devils in Hell ;
Ay ; Heaven and Hell in accordant chime
With the universal rhythm and rhyme
Were nearing the secret of Space and Time ;
The song of that ultimate mystery
Which only the mad blind men who see,
Led by the laugh of a little child,
Can utter ; ay, wilder and yet more wild
It maddened, till now—full song—it was out !
It roared from the starry roundabout—

*A child was born in Bethlehem, in Bethlehem, in Bethlehem,
 A child was born in Bethlehem ; ah, hear my fairy fable ;
 For I have seen the King of Kings, no longer thronged with
 angel wings,
 But croodling like a little babe, and cradled in a stable.*

*The wise men came to greet him with their gifts of myrrh
 and frankincense,—
 Gold and myrrh and frankincense they brought to make
 him mirth ;
 And would you know the way to win to little brother
 Peterkin,
 My childhood's heart shall guide you through the glories
 of the earth.*

*A child was born in Bethlehem, in Bethlehem, in Bethlehem ;
 The wise men came to welcome him : a star stood o'er the
 gable ;
 And there they saw the King of Kings, no longer thronged
 with angel wings,
 But croodling like a little babe, and cradled in a stable.*

And creeping through the music once again the fairy cry
 Came freezing o'er the snowy towers to lead us on to
 Peterkin :

Once more the fairy bugles blew from lands beyond the sky,
 And we all groped out together, dazed and blind, we knew
 not why ;

Out through the City's farther gates we went to look for
 Peterkin ;

Out, out into the dark Unknown, and heard the clamour die
 Far, far away behind us as we trotted on to Peterkin.

Then once more along the rare
 Forest-paths we groped our way :
 Here the glow-worm's league-long glare
 Turned the Wild Thyme night to day :

There we passed a sort of whale
Sixty feet in length or more,
But we knew it was a snail
Even when we heard it snore.

Often through the glamorous gloom
Almost on the top of us
We beheld a beetle loom
Like a hippopotamus ;
Once or twice a spotted toad
Like a mountain wobbled by
With a rolling moon that glowed
Through the skin-fringe of its eye.

Once a caterpillar bowed
Down a leaf of Ygdrasil
Like a sunset-coloured cloud
Sleeping on a quiet hill :
Once we came upon a moth
Fast asleep with outspread wings,
Like a mighty tissued cloth
Woven for the feet of kings.

There above the woods in state
Many a temple dome that glows
Delicately like a great
Rainbow-coloured bubble rose :
Though they were but flowers on earth,
Oh, we dared not enter in ;
For in that divine re-birth
Less than awe were more than sin !

Yet their mystic anthems came
Sweetly to our listening ears ,
And their burden was the same—
“ No more sorrow, no more tears !

Whither Peterkin has gone
 You, assuredly, shall go :
 When your wanderings are done,
 All he knows you, too, shall know ! ”

So we thought we'd onward roam
 Till earth's Smallest Flower appeared,
 With a less tremendous dome
 Less divinely to be feared :
 Then, perchance, if we should dare
 Timidly to enter in,
 Might some kindly doorkeeper
 Give us news of Peterkin.

At last we saw a crimson porch
 Far away, like a dull red torch
 Burning in the purple gloom ;
 And a great ocean of perfume
 Rolled round us as we drew anear,
 And then we strangely seemed to hear
 The shadow of a mighty psalm,
 A sound as if a golden sea
 Of music swung in utter calm
 Against the shores of Eternity ;
 And then we saw the mighty dome
 Of some mysterious Temple tower
 On high ; and knew that we had come,
 At last, to that sweet House of Grace
 Which wise men find in every place—
 The Temple of the Smallest Flower.

And there—alas—our fairy friends
 Whispered, “ Here our kingdom ends :
 You must enter in alone,
 But your souls will surely show
 Whither Peterkin is gone
 And the road that you must go :

We, poor fairies, have no souls !
Hark, the warning hare-bell tolls ; ”
So “ Good-bye, good-bye,” they said,
“ Dear little seekers-for-the-dead.”

They vanished ; ah, but as they went
We heard their voices softly blent
In some mysterious fairy song
That seemed to make us wise and strong ;
For it was like the holy calm
That fills the bosomed rose with balm,
Or blessings that the twilight breathes
Where the honeysuckle wreathes
Between young lovers and the sky
As on banks of flowers they lie ;
And with wings of rose and green
Laughing fairies pass unseen,
Singing their sweet lullaby,—
Lulla-lulla-lullaby !
Lulla-lulla-lullaby !
Ah, good night, with lullaby !

• • • • • • •

Only a flower ? Those carven walls,
Those cornices and coronals,
The splendid crimson porch, the thin
Strange sounds of singing from within—

Through the scented arch we stept,
Pushed back the soft petallic door,
And down the velvet aisles we crept ;
Was it a Flower—no more ?

For one of the voices that we heard,
A child’s voice, clear as the voice of a bird,
Was it not ?—nay, it could not be !
And a woman’s voice that tenderly

Answered him in fond refrain,
 And pierced our hearts with sweet sweet pain,
 As if dear Mary-mother hung
 Above some little child, and sung
 Between the waves of that golden sea
 The cradle-songs of Eternity ;
 And, while in her deep smile he basked,
 Answered whatsoe'er he asked.

*What is there hid in the heart of a rose,
 Mother-mine ?
 Ah, who knows, who knows, who knows ?
 A man that died on a lonely hill
 May tell you, perhaps, but none other will,
 Little child.*

*What does it take to make a rose,
 Mother-mine ?
 The God that died to make it knows
 It takes the world's eternal wars,
 It takes the moon and all the stars,
 It takes the might of heaven and hell
 And the everlasting Love as well,
 Little child.*

But there, in one great shrine apart
 Within the Temple's holiest heart,
 We came upon a blinding light,
 Suddenly, and a burning throne
 Of pinnacled glory, wild and white ;
 We could not see Who reigned thereon ;
 For, all at once, as a wood-bird sings,
 The aisles were full of great white wings

Row above mystic burning row ;
 And through the splendour and the glow
 We saw four angels, great and sweet,
 With outspread wings and folded feet,

Come gliding down from a heaven within
The golden heart of Paradise ;
And in their hands, with laughing eyes,
Lay little brother Peterkin.

And all around the Temple of the Smallest of the Flowers
The glory of the angels made a star for little Peterkin;
For all the Kings of Splendour and all the Heavenly Powers
Were gathered there together in the fairy forest bowers
With all their globed and radiant wings to make a star
for Peterkin,
The star that shone upon the East, a star that still is ours,
Whene'er we hang our stockings up, a star of wings for
Peterkin.

Then all, in one great flash, was gone—
A voice cried, “ Hush, all’s well ! ”
And we stood dreaming there alone,
In darkness. Who can tell
The mystic quiet that we felt,
As if the woods in worship knelt
Far off we heard a bell
Tolling strange human folk to prayer
Through fields of sunset-coloured air.

And then a voice, “ Why, here they are ! ”
And—as it seemed—we woke ;
The sweet old skies, great star by star
Upon our vision broke ;
Field over field of heavenly blue
Rose o’er us ; then a voice we knew
Softly and gently spoke—
“ See, they are sleeping by the side
Of that dear little one—who died.”

PART V.—THE HAPPY ENDING.

WE told dear father all our tale
That night before we went to bed,
And at the end his face grew pale,
And he bent over us and said
(Was it not strange?) he, too, was there,
A weary, weary watch to keep
Before the gates of the City of Sleep ;
But, ere we came, he did not dare
Even to dream of entering in,
Or even to hope for Peterkin.
He was the poor blind man, he said,
And we—how low he bent his head !
Then he called mother near ; and low
He whispered to us—"Prompt me now ;
For I forget that song we heard,
But you remember every word."
Then memory came like a breaking morn,
And we breathed it to him—*A child was born !*
And there he drew us to his breast
And softly murmured all the rest.—

*The wise men came to greet him with their gifts of myrrh
and frankincense,—
Gold and myrrh and frankincense they brought to make
him mirth ;
And would you know the way to win to little brother
Peterkin,
My childhood's heart shall guide you through the glories
of the earth.*

Then he looked up and mother knelt
Beside us, oh, her eyes were bright ;
Her arms were like a lovely belt
All round us as we said Good-night
To father : *he* was crying now,
But they were happy tears, somehow ;
For there we saw dear mother lay
Her cheek against his cheek and say—
Hush, let me kiss those tears away.

DEDICATION.

*WHAT can a wanderer bring
To little ones loved like you ?
You have songs of your own to sing
That are far more steadfast and true,
Crumbs of pity for birds
That flit o'er your sun-swept lawn,
Songs that are dearer than all our words
With a love that is clear as the dawn.*

*What should a dreamer devise,
In the depths of his wayward will,
To deepen the gleam of your eyes
Who can dance with the Sun-child still ?
Yet you glanced on his lonely way,
You cheered him in dream and deed,
And his heart is o'erflowing, o'erflowing to-day
With a love that—you never will need.*

*What can a pilgrim teach
To dwellers in fairy-land ?
Truth that excels all speech
You murmur and understand !
All he can sing you he brings ;
But—one thing more if he may,
One thing more that the King of Kings
Will take from the child on the way.*

*It has wings ! they return thro' the night
To a sky where the light lives yet,
Fresh as the dawn on his mountain-height
And the path that his feet forgot,
Wings from the night re-arisen
Because they remember your eyes
And the gleam that brought to his earthly prison
The passion of Paradise.*

*Kind little eyes that I love,
Eyes forgetful of mine,
In a dream I am bending above
Your sleep, and you open and shine ;
And I know as my own grow blind
With a lonely prayer for your sake,
He will hear—even me—little eyes that were kind.
God bless you, asleep or awake.*

FORTY SINGING SEAMEN AND OTHER POEMS.

TO GARNETT.

FORTY SINGING SEAMEN.

"In our lands be Beeres and Lyons of dyvers colours as ye redd, grene, black, and white. And in our land be also unicorns and these Unicorns slee many Lyons. . . . Also there dare no man make a lye in our lande, for if he dyde he sholde incontynent be sleyn."—*Mediæval Epistle of Pope Prester John.*

I.

ACROSS the seas of Wonderland to Mogadore we plodded,
Forty singing seamen in an old black barque,
And we landed in the twilight where a Polyphemus nodded
With his battered moon-eye winking red and yellow
through the dark !

For his eye was growing mellow,
Rich and ripe and red and yellow,
As was time, since old Ulysses made him bellow in the
dark !

Cho.—Since Ulysses bunged his eye up with a pine-torch
in the dark !

II.

Were they mountains in the gloaming or the giant's ugly
shoulders
Just beneath the rolling eyeball, with its bleared and
vinous glow,
Red and yellow o'er the purple of the pines among the
boulders
And the shaggy horror brooding on the sullen slopes below,

Were they pines among the boulders
 Or the hair upon his shoulders?
 We were only simple seamen, so of course we didn't
 know.

Cho.—We were simple singing seamen, so of course we
 couldn't know.

III.

But we crossed a plain of poppies, and we came upon a
 fountain

Not of water, but of jewels, like a spray of leaping fire;
 And behind it, in an emerald glade, beneath a golden
 mountain

There stood a crystal palace, for a sailor to admire;
 For a troop of ghosts came round us,
 Which with leaves of bay they crowned us,
 Then with grog they wellnigh drowned us, to the depth
 of our desire!

Cho.—And 'twas very friendly of them, as a sailor can
 admire!

IV.

There was music all about us, we were growing quite
 forgetful

We were only singing seamen from the dirt of London-
 town,

Though the nectar that we swallowed seemed to vanish
 half regretful

As if we wasn't good enough to take such vittles down,
 When we saw a sudden figure,
 Tall and black as any nigger,
 Like the devil—only bigger—drawing near us with a
 frown!

Cho.—Like the devil—but much bigger—and he wore a
 golden crown!

V.

And “what’s all this?” he growls at us! With dignity we chaunted,

“Forty singing seamen, sir, as won’t be put upon!”
“What? Englishmen?” he cries, “Well, if ye don’t mind being haunted,

Faith you’re welcome to my palace; I’m the famous Prester John!

Will ye walk into my palace?
I don’t bear ‘ee any malice!

One and all ye shall be welcome in the halls of Prester John!”

Cho.—So we walked into the palace and the halls of Prester John!

VI.

Now the door was one great diamond and the hall a hollow ruby—

Big as Beachy Head, my lads, nay bigger by a half!
And I sees the mate wi’ mouth agape, a-staring like a booby,
And the skipper close behind him, with his tongue out like a calf!

Now the way to take it rightly
Was to walk along politely

Just as if you didn’t notice—so I couldn’t help but laugh!
Cho.—For they both forgot their manners and the crew was bound to laugh!

VII.

But he took us through his palace and, my lads, as I’m a sinner,

We walked into an opal like a sunset-coloured cloud—
“My dining-room,” he says, and, quick as light we saw a dinner

Spread before us by the fingers of a hidden fairy crowd;

And the skipper, swaying gently
 After dinner, murmurs faintly,
 "I looks to-wards you, Prester John, you've done us
 very proud!"

Cho.—And we drank his health with honours, for he *done*
 us *very* proud!

VIII.

Then he walks us to his garden where we sees a feathered
 demon

Very splendid and important on a sort of spicy tree!
 "That's the Phœnix," whispers Prester, "which all
 eddicated seamen

Knows the only one existent, and *he's* waiting for to
 flee!

When his hundred years expire
 Then he'll set hisself a-fire

And another from his ashes rise most beautiful to see!"

Cho.—With wings of rose and emerald most beautiful to
 see!

IX.

Then he says, "In yonder forest there's a little silver river,
 And whosoever drinks of it, his youth shall never die!"

The centuries go by, but Prester John endures for ever
 With his music in the mountains and his magic on the
 sky!

While *your* hearts are growing colder,

While *your* world is growing older,

There's a magic in the distance, where the sea-line meets
 the sky."

Cho.—It shall call to singing seamen till the fount o' song
 is dry!

X.

So we thought we'd up and seek it, but that forest fair
defied us,—

First a crimson leopard laughs at us most horrible
to see,

Then a sea-green lion came and sniffed and licked his chops
and eyed us,

While a red and yellow unicorn was dancing round a
tree!

We was trying to look thinner,

Which was hard, because our dinner

Must ha' made us very tempting to a cat o' high
degree!

Cho.—Must ha' made us very tempting to the whole
menarjeree!

XI.

So we scuttled from that forest and across the poppy
meadows

Where the awful shaggy horror brooded o'er us in the
dark!

And we pushes out from shore again a-jumping at our
shadows,

And pulls away most joyful to the old black barque!

And home again we plodded

While the Polyphemus nodded

With his battered moon-eye winking red and yellow
through the dark.

Cho.—Oh, the moon above the mountains, red and yellow
through the dark!

XII.

Across the seas of Wonderland to London-town we blundered,

Forty singing seamen as was puzzled for to know
If the visions that we saw was caused by—here again we pondered—

A tipple in a vision forty thousand years ago.

Could the grog we *dreamt* we swallowed

Make us *dream* of all that followed?

We were only simple seamen, so of course we didn't know!

Cho.—We were simple singing seamen, so of course we could not know!

THE EMPIRE BUILDERS.

WHO are the Empire-builders? They
 Whose desperate arrogance demands
 A self reflecting power to sway
 A hundred little selfless lands?
 Lord God of battles, ere we bow
 To these and to their soulless lust,
 Let fall Thy thunders on us now
 And strike us equal to the dust.

Before the stars in heaven were made
 Our great Commander led us forth;
 And now the embattled lines are laid
 To East, to West, to South, to North;
 According as of old He planned
 We take our station in the field,
 Nor dare to dream we understand
 The splendour of the swords we wield.

We know not what the Soul intends
 That lives and moves behind our deeds;
 We wheel and march to glorious ends
 Beyond the common soldier's needs:
 And some are raised to high rewards,
 And some by regiments are hurled
 To die upon the opposing swords
 And sleep—forgotten by the world

And not where navies churn the foam,
Nor called to fields of fierce emprise,
In many a country cottage-home
The Empire-builder lives and dies :
Or through the roaring streets he goes
A lean and weary City slave,
The conqueror of a thousand foes
Who walks, unheeded, to his grave.

Leaders unknown of hopes forlorn
Go past us in the daily mart,
With many a shadowy crown of thorn
And many a kingly broken heart :
Though England's banner overhead
Ever the secret signal flew,
We only see its Cross is red
As children see the skies are blue.

For all are Empire-builders here,
Whose hearts are true to heaven and home
And, year by slow revolving year,
Fulfil the duties as they come ;
So simple seems the task, and yet
Many for this are crucified ;
Ay, and their brother-men forget
The simple wounds in palm and side.

But he that to his home is true,
Where'er the tides of power may flow,
Has built a kingdom great and new
Which Time nor Fate shall overthrow
These are the Empire-builders, these
Annex where none shall say them nay
Beyond the world's uncharted seas
Realms that can never pass away.

NELSON'S YEAR.

(1905.)

I.

“HASTEN the Kingdom, England!”

This year, a hundred years ago,
The world attended, breathless, on the gathering pomp of
war,

While England and her deathless dead, with all their
mighty hearts aglow,
Swept onward like the dawn of doom to triumph at
Trafalgar;

Then the world was hushed to wonder
As the cannon's dying thunder
Broke out again in muffled peals across the heaving sea,
And home the Victor came at last,
Home, home, with England's flag half-mast,
That never dipped to foe before, on Nelson's Victory.

II.

God gave this year to England;
And what He gives He takes again;
He gives us life, He gives us death: our victories have
wings;
He gives us love and in its heart He hides the whole
world's heart of pain:
We gain by loss: impartially the eternal balance swings!

Ay ; in the fire we cherish
 Our thoughts and dreams may perish ;
 Yet shall it burn for England's sake triumphant as of old !
 What sacrifice could gain for her
 Our own shall still maintain for her,
 And hold the gates of Freedom wide that take no keys of
 gold.

III.

God gave this year to England ;
 Her eyes are far too bright for tears
 Of sorrow ; by her silent dead she kneels, too proud for
 pride ;
 Their blood, their love, have bought her right to claim
 the new imperial years
 In England's name for Freedom, in whose love her
 children died ;
 In whose love, though hope may dwindle,
 Love and brotherhood shall kindle
 Between the striving nations as a choral song takes fire,
 Till new hope, new faith, new wonder
 Cleave the clouds of doubt asunder,
 And speed the union of mankind in one divine desire.

IV.

Hasten the Kingdom, England ;
 This year across the listening world
 There came a sound of mingled tears where victory and
 defeat
 Clasped hands ; and Peace—among the dead—stood
 wistfully, with white wings furled,
 Knowing the strife was idle ; for the night and morning
 meet,
 Yet there is no disunion
 In heaven's divine communion

As through the gates of twilight the harmonious morning
pours ;

Ah, God speed that grander morrow

When the world's divinest sorrow

Shall show how Love stands knocking at the world's
unopened doors.

V.

Hasten the Kingdom, England ;

Look up across the narrow seas,

Across the great white nations to thy dark imperial throne

Where now three hundred million souls attend on thine
august decrees ;

Ah, bow thine head in humbleness, the Kingdom is thine
own :

Not for the pride or power

God gave thee this in dower ;

But, now the West and East have met and wept their
mortal loss,

Now that their tears have spoken

And the long dumb spell is broken,

Is it nothing that thy banner bears the red eternal cross ?

VI.

Ay ! Lift the flag of England ;

And lo, that Eastern cross is there,

Veiled with a hundred meanings as our English eyes are
veiled ;

Yet to the grander dawn we move oblivious of the sign
we bear,

Oblivious of the heights we climb until the last is scaled ;

Then with all the earth before us

And the great cross floating o'er us

We shall break the sword we forged of old, so weak we
were and blind ;
While the inviolate heaven discloses
England's Rose of all the roses
Dawning wide and ever wider o'er the kingdom of mankind.

VII.

Hasten the Kingdom, England ;
For then all nations shall be one ;
One as the ordered stars are one that sing upon their way,
One with the rhythmic glories of the swinging sea and
the rolling sun,
One with the flow of life and death, the tides of night and day ;
One with all dreams of beauty,
One with all laws of duty ;
One with the weak and helpless while the one sky burns
above ;
Till eyes by tears made glorious
Look up at last victorious,
And lips that starved break open in one song of life and love.

VIII.

Hasten the Kingdom, England ;
And when the Spring returns again
Rekindle in our English hearts the universal Spring,
That we may wait in faith upon the former and the
latter rain,
Till all waste places burgeon and the wildernesses sing ;
Pour the glory of thy pity
Through the dark and troubled city ;
Pour the splendour of thy beauty over wood and meadow
fair ;
May the God of battles guide thee
And the Christ-child walk beside thee
With a word of peace for England in the dawn of Nelson's
Year.

IN TIME OF WAR

I.

To-NIGHT o'er Bagshot heath the purple heather
 Rolls like dumb thunder to the splendid West ;
 And mighty ragged clouds are massed together
 Above the scarred old common's broken breast ;

And there are hints of blood between the boulders,
 Red glints of fiercer blossom, bright and bold ;
 And round the shaggy mounds and sullen shoulders
 The gorse repays the sun with savage gold.

And now, as in the West the light grows holy,
 And all the hollows of the heath grow dim,
 Far off, a sulky rumble rolls up slowly
 Where guns at practice growl their evening hymn.

And here and there in bare clean yellow spaces
 The print of horse-hoofs like an answering cry
 Strikes strangely on the sense from lonely places
 Where there is nought but empty heath and sky.

The print of warlike hoofs, where now no figure
 Of horse or man along the sky's red rim
 Breaks on the low horizon's rough black rigour
 To make the gorgeous waste less wild and grim ;

Strangely the hoof-prints strike, a Crusoe's wonder,
Framed with sharp furze amongst the footless fells,
A menace and a mystery, rapt asunder,
As if the whole wide world contained nought else,—

Nought but the grand despair of desolation
Between us and that wild, how far, how near,
Where, clothed with thunder, nation grapples nation,
And Slaughter grips the clay-cold hand of Fear.

II.

And far above the purple heath the sunset stars awaken,
And ghostly hosts of cloud across the West begin to
stream,
And all the low soft winds with muffled cannonades are
shaken,
And all the blood-red blossom draws aloof into a dream;

A dream—no more—and round the dream the clouds are
curled together;
A dream of two great stormy hosts embattled in the
sky;
For there against the low red heavens each sombre ridge
of heather
Up-heaves a hedge of bayonets around a battle-cry;

Melts in the distant battlefield or brings the dream so
near it
That, almost, as the rifted clouds around them swim
and reel,
A thousand grey-lipped faces flash—ah, hark, the heart can
hear it—
The sharp command that lifts as one the levelled
lines of steel.

And through the purple thunders there are silent shadows
creeping
With murderous gleams of light, and then—a mighty
leaping roar
Where foe and foe are met ; and then—a long low sound
of weeping
As Death laughs out from sea to sea, another fight is
o'er.

Another fight—but ah, how much is over? Night de-
scending
Draws o'er the scene her ghastly moon-shot veil with
piteous hands ;
But all around the bivouac-glare the shadowy pickets
wending
See sights, hear sounds that only war's own madness
understands.

No circle of the accursed dead where dreaming Dante
wandered,
No city of death's eternal dole could match this mortal
world
Where men, before the living soul and quivering flesh are
sundered,
Through all the bestial shapes of pain to one wide grave
are hurled.

But in the midst for those who dare beyond the fringe to
enter
Be sure one kingly figure lies with pale and blood-soiled
face,
And round his brows a ragged crown of thorns ; and in
the centre
Of those pale folded hands and feet the sigil of his
grace.

See, how the pale limbs, marred and scarred in love's lost
battle, languish ;
See how the splendid passion still smiles quietly from his
eyes :
Come, come and see a king indeed, who triumphs in his
anguish,
Who conquers here in utter loss beneath the eternal skies.

For unto lips so deadly calm what answer shall be given ?
Oh pale, pale king so deadly still beneath the unshaken
stars,
Who shall deny thy kingdom here, though heaven and earth
were riven,
With the last roar of onset in the world's intestine wars ?

The laugh is Death's ; he laughs as erst o'er hours that
England cherished,
“ Count up, count up the stricken homes that wail the
firstborn son,
Count by your starved and fatherless the tale of what hath
perished ;
Then gather with your foes and ask if you—or I—have
won.”

III.

The world rolls on ; and love and peace are mated :
Still on the breast of England, like a star,
The blood-red lonely heath blows, consecrated,
A brooding practice-ground for blood-red war.

Yet is there nothing out of tune with Nature
There, where the skylark showers his earliest song,
Where sun and wind have moulded every feature,
And one world-music bears each note along.

There many a brown-winged kestrel swoops or hovers
 In poised and patient quest of his own prey ;
 And there are fern-clad glens where happy lovers
 May kiss the murmuring summer noon away.

There, as the primal earth was—all is glorious
 Perfect and wise and wonderful in view
 Of that great heaven through which we rise victorious
 O'er all that strife and change and death can do.

No nation yet has risen o'er earth's first nature ;
 Though love illumed each individual mind,
 Like some half-blind, half-formed primeval creature
 The State still crawled a thousand years behind.

Still on the standards of the great World-Powers
 Lion and bear and eagle sullenly brood,
 Whether the slow folds flap o'er halcyon hours
 Or stream tempestuously o'er fields of blood.

By war's red evolution we have risen
 Far, since fierce Erda chose her conquering few,
 And out of Death's red gates and Time's grey prison
 They burst, elect from battle, tried and true.

But now Death mocks at youth and love and glory,
 Chivalry slinks behind his loaded mines,
 With meaner murderous lips War tells her story,
 And round her cunning brows no laurel shines.

And here to us the eternal charge is given
 To rise and make our low world touch God's high :
 To hasten God's own kingdom, Man's own heaven,
 And teach Love's grander army how to die.

No kingdom then, no long-continuing city
 Shall e'er again be stablished by the sword ;
 No blood-bought throne defy the powers of pity,
 No despot's crown outweigh one helot's word.

Imperial England, breathe thy marching orders :

The great host waits ; the end, the end is close,
When earth shall know thy peace in all her borders,
And all her deserts blossom with thy Rose.

Prinedoms and peoples rise and flash and perish

As the dew passes from the flowering thorn ;
Yet the one Kingdom that our dreams still cherish
Lives in a light that blinds the world's red morn.

Hasten the Kingdom, England, the days darken ;

We would not have thee slacken watch or ward,
Nor doff thine armour till the whole world hearken,
Nor till Time bid thee lay aside the sword.

Hasten the Kingdom ; hamlet, heath, and city,

We are all at war, one bleeding bulk of pain ;
Little we know ; but one thing—by God's pity—
We know, and know all else on earth is vain.

We know not yet how much we dare, how little ;

We dare not dream of peace ; yet, as at need.
England, God help thee, let no jot or tittle
Of Love's last law go past thee without heed.

Who saves his life shall lose it ! The great ages

Bear witness—Rome and Babylon and Tyre
Cry from the dust-stopped lips of all their sages.—
There is no hope if man can climb no higher.

England, by God's grace set apart to ponder

A little while from battle, ah, take heed,
Keep watch, keep watch, beside thy sleeping thunder;
Call down Christ's pity while those others bleed ;

Waken the God within thee, while the sorrow

Of battle surges round a distant shore,
While Time is thine, lest on some deadly morrow
The moving finger write—but thine no more.

Little we know—but though the advancing æons
Win every painful step by blood and fire,
Though tortured mouths must chant the world's great
pæans,

And martyred souls proclaim the world's desire;

Though war be nature's engine of rejection,

Soon, soon, across her universal verge
The soul of man in sacred insurrection
Shall into God's diviner light emerge.

Hasten the Kingdom, England, queen and mother;

Little we know of all Time's works and ways;
Yet this, this, this is sure : we need none other
Knowledge or wisdom, hope or aim or praise,

But to keep this one stormy banner flying

In this one faith that none shall e'er disprove,
Then drive the embattled world before thee, crying
There is one Emperor, whose name is Love.

ODE FOR THE SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY
OF SWINBURNE.

I.

HE needs no crown of ours, whose golden heart
 Poured out its wealth so freely in pure praise
 Of others : him the imperishable bays
 Crown, and on Sunium's height he sits apart :
 He hears immortal greetings this great morn :
 Fain would we bring, we also, all we may,
 Some wayside flower of transitory bloom,
 Frail tribute, only born
 To greet the gladness of this April day
 Then waste on death's dark wind its faint perfume.

II.

Here on this April day the whole sweet Spring
 Speaks thro' his music only, or seems to speak,
 And we that hear, with hearts uplift and weak,
 What can we more than claim him for our king ?
 Here on this April day (and many a time
 Shall April come and find him singing still)
 He is one with the world's great heart beyond the
 years,
 One with the pulsing rhyme
 Of tides that work some heavenly rhythmic will
 And hold the secret of all human tears.

III.

For he, the last of that immortal race
 Whose music, like a robe of living light
 Re-clothed each new-born age and made it bright
 As with the glory of Love's transfiguring face,
 Reddened earth's roses, kindled the deep blue
 Of England's radiant, ever-singing sea,
 Recalled the white Thalassian from the foam,
 Woke the dim stars anew
 And triumphed in the triumph of Liberty,
 We claim him ; but he hath not here his home.

IV.

Not here ; round him to-day the clouds divide :
 We know what faces thro' that rose-flushed air
 Now bend above him : Shelley's face is there,
 And Hugo's, lit with more than kingly pride.
 Replenished there with splendour, the blind eyes
 Of Milton bend from heaven to meet his own,
 Sappho is there, crowned with those queenlier flowers
 Whose graft outgrew our skies,
 His gift : Shakespeare leans earthward from his throne
 With hands outstretched. He needs no crown of
 ours.

IN CLOAK OF GRAY.

I.

LOVE's a pilgrim, cloaked in gray,
 And his feet are pierced and bleeding :
 Have ye seen him pass this way
 Sorrowfully pleading ?
 Ye that weep the world away,
 Have ye seen King Love to-day ?—

II.

Yea, we saw him ; but he came
 Poppy-crowned and white of limb !
 Song had touched his lips with flame,
 And his eyes were drowsed and dim :
 And we kissed the hours away
 Till night grew rosier than the day.—

III.

Hath he left you ?—yea, he left us
 A little while ago,
 Of his laughter quite bereft us
 And his limbs of snow ;
 We know not why he went away
 Who ruled our revels yesterday.—

IV.

Because ye did not understand
Love cometh from afar,
A pilgrim out of Holy Land
Guided by a star :
Last night he came in cloak of gray,
Begging. Ye knew him not : he went his way.

A RIDE FOR THE QUEEN.

QUEEN of queens, oh lady mine,
 You who say you love me,
 Here's a cup of crimson wine
 To the stars above me ;
 Here's a cup of blood and gall
 For a soldier's quaffing !
 What's the prize to crown it all ?
 Death ? I'll take it laughing !
 I ride for the Queen to-night !

Though I find no knightly fee
 Waiting on my lealty,
 High upon the gallows-tree
 Faithful to my fealty,
 What had I but love and youth,
 Hope and fame in season ?
 She has proved that more than truth
 Glorifies her treason !

Would that other do as much ?
 Ah, but if in sorrow
 Some forgotten look or touch
 Pierce her heart to-morrow
 She might love me yet, I think ;
 So her lie befriends me,
 Though I know there's darker drink
 Down the road she sends me.

Ay, one more great chance is mine
 (Can I faint or falter?)
 She shall pour my blood like wine,
 Make my heart her altar,
 Burn it to the dust! For, there,
 What if o'er the embers
 She should stoop and—I should hear—
“Hush! Thy love remembers!”

One more chance for every word
 Whispered to betray me,
 While she buckled on my sword
 Smiling to allay me;
 One more chance; ah, let me not
 Mar her perfect pleasure;
 Love shall pay me, jot by jot,
 Measure for her measure.

Faith shall think I never knew,
 I will be so fervent!
 Doubt shall dream I dreamed her true,
 As her war-worn servant!
 Whoso flouts her spotless name
 (Love, I wear thy token!)
 He shall face one sword of flame
 Ere the lie be spoken!

All the world's a-foam with may,
 (Fragrant as her bosom!)
 Could I find a sweeter way
 Through the year's young blossom,
 Where her warm red mouth on mine
 Woke my soul's desire? . . .
 Hey! The cup of crimson wine,
 Blood and gall and fire!

Castle Doom or Gates of Death?
(Smile again for pity !)
“ Boot and horse,” my lady saith,
“ Spur against the City,
Bear this message !” God and she
Still forget the guerdon ;
Nay, the rope is on the tree !
That shall bear the burden !
I ride for the Queen to-night !

SONG.

I.

WHEN that I loved a maiden
 My heaven was in her eyes,
 And when they bent above me
 I knew no deeper skies ;
 But when her heart forsook me
 My spirit broke its bars,
 For grief beyond the sunset
 And love beyond the stars.

II.

When that I loved a maiden
 She seemed the world to me :
 Now is my soul the universe,
 My dreams the sky and sea :
 There is no heaven above me,
 No glory binds or bars
 My grief beyond the sunset,
 My love beyond the stars.

III.

When that I loved a maiden
 I worshipped where she trod ;
 But, when she clove my heart, the cleft
 Set free the imprisoned god :
 Then was I king of all the world,
 My soul had burst its bars,
 For grief beyond the sunset
 And love beyond the stars.

THE HIGHWAYMAN.

PART ONE.

I.

THE wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
 The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
 The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
 And the highwayman came riding—
 Riding—riding—
 The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

II.

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,
 A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin;
 They fitted with never a wrinkle: his boots were up to the thigh!
 And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,
 His pistol butts a-twinkle,
 His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

III.

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark
inn-yard,
And he tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all
was locked and barred;
He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be
waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
 Bess, the landlord's daughter,
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

IV.

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket
creaked
Where Tim the ostler listened; his face was white and
peaked;
His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy
hay,
But he loved the landlord's daughter,
 The landlord's red-lipped daughter,
Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber
say—

V.

"One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize
to-night,
But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the
morning light;
Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through
the day,
Then look for me by moonlight,
 Watch for me by moonlight,
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar
the way."

VI.

He rose upright in the stirrups; he scarce could reach
her hand,
But she loosened her hair i' the casement! His face
burnt like a brand
As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over
his breast;
And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,
(Oh, sweet black waves in the moonlight!)
Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped
away to the West.

PART Two.

I.

He did not come in the dawning; he did not come
at noon;
And out o' the tawny sunset, before the rise o' the moon,
When the road was a gipsy's ribbon, looping the purple
moor,
A red-coat troop came marching—
Marching—marching—
King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-
door.

II.

They said no word to the landlord, they drank his ale
instead,
But they gagged his daughter and bound her to the
foot of her narrow bed;
Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at
their side!
There was death at every window;
And hell at one dark window;
For Bess could see, through her casement, the road
that *he* would ride.

III.

They had tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering jest ;
They had bound a musket beside her, with the barrel beneath her breast !
“ Now keep good watch ! ” and they kissed her.
She heard the dead man say—
Look for me by moonlight ;
Watch for me by moonlight ;
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way !

IV.

She twisted her hands behind her ; but all the knots held good !
She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with sweat or blood !
They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours crawled by like years,
Till, now, on the stroke of midnight,
 Cold, on the stroke of midnight,
The tip of one finger touched it ! The trigger at least was hers !

V.

The tip of one finger touched it ; she strove no more for the rest !
Up, she stood up to attention, with the barrel beneath her breast,
She would not risk their hearing ; she would not strive again ;
For the road lay bare in the moonlight ;
 Blank and bare in the moonlight ;
And the blood of her veins in the moonlight throbbed to her love's refrain.

VI.

Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot! Had they heard it? The horse-hoofs
ringing clear;
Tlot-tlot, tlot-tlot, in the distance? Were they deaf that
they did not hear?
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,
The highwayman came riding,
 Riding, riding!
The red-coats looked to their priming! She stood up,
straight and still!

VII.

Tlot-tlot, in the frosty silence! *Tlot-tlot,* in the echoing
night!
Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light!
Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last deep
breath,
Then her finger moved in the moonlight,
 Her musket shattered the moonlight,
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him
—with her death.

VIII.

He turned; he spurred to the Westward; he did not know
 who stood
Bowed, with her head o'er the musket, drenched with her
 own red blood!
Not till the dawn he heard it, and slowly blanched to hear
How Bess, the landlord's daughter,
 The landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in
the darkness there.

IX.

Back, he spurred like a madman, shrieking a curse to the sky,
 With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier brandished high !
 Blood-red were his spurs i' the golden noon ; wine-red was his velvet coat ;
 When they shot him down on the highway,
 Down like a dog on the highway,
 And he lay in his blood on the highway, with the bunch of lace at his throat.

* * * * * *

X.

And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the trees,
When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
A highwayman comes riding—
Riding—riding—
A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.

XI.

Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard ;
And he taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and barred ;
He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Bess, the landlord's daughter,
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

THE HAUNTED PALACE.

COME to the haunted palace of my dreams,
 My crumbling palace by the eternal sea,
 Which, like a childless mother, still must croon
 Her ancient sorrows to the cold white moon,
 Or, ebbing tremulously,
 With one pale arm, where the long foam-fringe gleams,
 Will gather her rustling garments, for a space
 Of muffled weeping, round her dim white face.

A princess dwelt here once : long, long ago
 This tower rose in the sunset like a prayer ;
 And, through the witchery of that casement, rolled
 In one soft cataract of faëry gold
 Her wonder-woven hair ;
 Her face leaned out and took the sacred glow
 Of evening, like the star that listened, high
 Above the gold clouds of the western sky.

Was there no prince behind her in the gloom,
 No crimson shadow of his rich array ?
 Her face leaned down to me : I saw the tears
 Bleed through her eyes with the slow pain of years,
 And her mouth yearned to say—
 “ Friend, is there any message, from the tomb
 Where love lies buried ? ” But she only said—
 “ Oh, friend, canst thou not save me from my dead ? ”

"Canst thou not minister to a soul in pain ?
 Or hast thou then no comfortable word ?
 Is there no faith in thee wherewith to atone
 For his unfaith who left me here alone,
 Heart-sick with hope deferred ;
 Oh, since my love will never come again,
 Bring'st thou no respite through the desolate years,
 Respite from these most unavailing tears ?"

Then saw I, and mine own tears made response,
 Her woman's heart come breaking through her eyes ;
 And, as I stood beneath the tower's gray wall,
 She let the soft waves of her deep hair fall
 Like flowers from Paradise
 Over my fevered face : then all at once
 Pity was passion ; and like a sea of bliss
 Those waves rolled o'er me drowning for her kiss.

* * * * *

Seven years we dwelt together in that tower,
 Seven years in that old palace by the sea,
 And sitting at that casement, side by side,
 She told me all her pain : how love had died
 Now for all else but me ;
 Yet how she had loved that other : like a flower
 Her red lips parted and with low sweet moan
 She pressed their tender suffering on mine own.

And always with vague eyes she gazed afar,
 Out through the casement o'er the changing tide ;
 And slowly was my heart's hope brought to nought
 That some day I should win each wandering thought
 And make her my soul's bride :
 Still, still she gazed across the cold sea-bar ;
 Ay ; with her hand in mine, still, still and pale,
 Waited and watched for the unreturning sail.

And I, too, watched and waited as the years
 Rolled on ; and slowly was I brought to feel
 How on my lips she met her lover's kiss,
 How my heart's pulse begat an alien bliss ;
 And cold and hard as steel
 For me those eyes were, though their tender tears
 Were salt upon my cheek ; and then one night
 I saw a sail come through the pale moonlight.

And like an alien ghost I stole away,
 And like a breathing lover he returned ;
 And in the woods I dwelt, or sometimes crept
 Out in the gray dawn while the lovers slept
 And the great sea-tides yearned
 Against the iron shores ; and faint and gray
 The tower and the shut casement rose above :
 And on the earth I sobbed out all my love.

At last, one royal rose-hung night in June,
 When the warm air like purple Hippocrene
 Brimmed the dim valley and sparkled into stars,
 I saw them cross the foam-lit sandy bars
 And dark pools, glimmering green,
 To bathe beneath the honey-coloured moon :
 I saw them swim out from that summer shore,
 Kissed by the sea, but they returned no more.

* * * * *

And into the dark palace, like a dream
 Remembered after long oblivious years,
 Through the strange open doors I crept and saw
 As some poor pagan might, with reverent awe,
 And deep adoring tears,
 The moonlight through that painted window stream
 Over the soft wave of their vacant bed ;
 There sank I on my knees and bowed my head,

For as a father by a cradle bows,
 Remembering two dead children of his own,
 I knelt ; and by the cry of the great deep
 Their love seemed like a murmuring in their sleep,
 A little fevered moan,
 A little tossing of childish arms that shows
 How dreams go by ! “ If I were God,” I wept,
 “ I would have pity on children while they slept.”

* * * * *

The days, the months, the years drift over me ;
 This is my habitation till I die :
 Nothing is changed ; they left that open book
 Beside the window. Did he sit and look
 Up at her face as I
 Looked while she read it, and the enchanted sea
 With rich eternities of love unknown
 Fulfilled the low sweet music of her tone ?

So did he listen, looking in her face ?
 And did she ever pause, remembering so
 The heart that bore the whole weight of her pain
 Until her own heart’s love returned again ?
 In the still evening glow
 I sit and listen in this quiet place,
 And only hear—like notes of phantom birds—
 Their perished kisses and little broken words.

*Come to the haunted palace of my dreams,
 My crumbling palace by the eternal sea,
 Which, like a childless mother, still must croon
 Her ancient sorrows to the cold white moon,
 Or, ebbing tremulously,
 With one pale arm, where the long foam-fringe gleams,
 Will gather her rustling garments, for a space
 Of muffled weeping, round her dim white face.*

THE SCULPTOR.

THIS is my statue : cold and white
 It stands and takes the morning light !
 The world may flout my hopes and fears,
 Yet was my life's work washed with tears
 Of blood when this poor hand last night
 Finished the pain of years.

Speak for me, patient lips of stone,
 Blind eyes my lips have rested on
 So often when the o'er-weary brain
 Would grope to human love again,
 And found this grave cold mask alone
 And the tears fell like rain.

Ay ; is this all ? Is this the brow
 I fondled, never wondering how
 It lived—the face of pain and bliss
 That through the marble met my kiss ?
 Oh, though the whole world praise it now,
 Let no man dream it is !

They blame ; they cannot blame aright
 Who never knew what infinite
 Deep loss must shame me most of all !
 They praise ; like earth their praises fall
 Into a tomb. The hour of light
 Is flown beyond recall.

Yet have I seen, yet have I known,
And oh, not tombed in cold white stone
 The dream I lose on earth below ;
 And I shall come with face aglow
And find and claim it for my own
 Before God's throne, **I** know.

SUMMER.

(AN ODE.)

Now like a pageant of the Golden Year
 In rich memorial pomp the hours go by,
 With rose-embroidered flags unfurled
 And tasselled bugles calling through the world
 Wake, for your hope draws near !
 Wake, for in each soft porch of azure sky,
 Seen through each arch of pale green leaves, the Gate
 Of Eden swings apart for Summer's royal state.

Ah, when the Spirit of the moving scene
 Has entered in, the splendour will be spent !
 The flutes will cease, the gates will close ;
 Only the scattered crimson of the rose,
 The wild wood's hapless queen,
 Dis-kingdomed, will declare the way he went ;
 And, in a little while, her court will go,
 Pass like a cloud and leave no trace on earth below.

Tell us no more of Autumn, the slow gold
 Of fruitage ripening in a world's decay,
 The falling leaves, the moist rich breath
 Of woods that swoon and crumble into death
 Over the gorgeous mould :
 Give us the flash and scent of keen-edged may
 Where wastes that bear no harvest yield their bloom,
 Rude crofts of flowering nettle, bents of yellow broom.

The very reeds and sedges of the fen
 Open their hearts and blossom to the sky ;
 The wild thyme on the mountain's knees
 Unrolls its purple market to the bees ;
 Unharvested of men
 The Traveller's Joy can only smile and die.
 Joy, joy alone the throbbing whitethroats bring,
 Joy to themselves and heaven ! They were but born to
 sing !

And see, between the northern-scented pines,
 The whole sweet summer sharpens to a glow !
 See, as the well-spring plashes cool
 Over a shadowy green fern-fretted pool
 The mystic sunbeam shines
 For one mad moment on a breast of snow
 A warm white shoulder and a glowing arm
 Up-flung, where some swift Undine sinks in shy alarm.

And if she were not all a dream, and lent
 Life for a little to your own desire,
 Oh, lover in the hawthorn lane,
 Dream not you hold her, or you dream in vain !
 The violet, spray-besprent
 When from that plunge the rainbows flashed like fire,
 Will scarce more swiftly lose its happy dew
 Than eyes which Undine haunts will cease to shine on
 you.

What though the throstle pour his heart away,
 A happy spendthrift of uncounted gold,
 Swinging upon a blossomed briar
 With soft throat lifted in a wild desire
 To make the world his may.
 Ever the pageant through the gates is rolled
 Further away ; in vain the rich notes throng
 Flooding the mellow noon with wave on wave of song.

The feathery meadows like a lilac sea,
 Knee-deep, with honeyed clover, red and white,
 Roll billowing : the crisp clouds pass
 Trailing their soft blue shadows o'er the grass ;
 The skylark, mad with glee,
 Quivers, up, up, to lose himself in light ;
 And, through the forest, like a fairy dream
 Through some dark mind, the ferns in branching beauty
 stream.

Enough of joy ! A little respite lend,
 Summer, fair god that hast so little heed
 Of these that serve thee but to die,
 Mere trappings of thy tragic pageantry !
 Show us the end, the end !
 We too, with human hearts that break and bleed,
 March to the night that rounds their fleeting hour,
 And feel we, too, perchance but serve some loftier
 Power.

Oh that our hearts might pass away with thee,
 Burning and pierced and full of thy sweet pain,
 Burst through the gates with thy swift soul,
 Hunt thy most white perfection to the goal,
 Nor wait, once more to see
 Thy chaliced lilies rotting in the rain,
 Thy ragged yellowing banners idly hung
 In woods that have forgotten all the songs we sung !

Peace ! Like a pageant of the Golden Year
In rich memorial pomp the hours go by,
With rose-embroidered flags unsurled
And tasselled bugles calling through the world
Wake, for your hope draws near !
Wake, for in each soft porch of azure sky,
Seen through each arch of pale green leaves, the Gate
Of Eden swings apart for Summer's royal state.

Not wait ! Forgive, forgive that feeble cry
 Of blinded passion all unworthy thee !
For here the spirit of man may claim
 A loftier vision and a nobler aim
 Than e'er was born to die :
Man only, of earth, throned on Eternity,
 From his own sure abiding-place can mark
 How earth's great golden dreams go past into
 the dark.

AT DAWN.

O HESPER-PHOSPHOR, far away
 Shining, the first, the last white star,
 Hear'st thou the strange, the ghostly cry,
 That moan of an ancient agony
 From purple forest to golden sky
 Shivering over the breathless bay?
 It is not the wind that wakes with the day ;
 For see, the gulls that wheel and call,
 Beyond the tumbling white-topped bar,
 Catching the sun-dawn on their wings,
 Like snow-flakes or like rose-leaves fail,
 Flutter and fall in airy rings ;
 And drift, like lilies ruffling into blossom
 Upon some golden lake's unwrinkled bosom.

Are not the forest's deep-lashed fringes wet
 With tears? Is not the voice of all regret
 Breaking out of the dark earth's heart?
 She too, she too, has loved and lost; and we—
 We that remember our lost Arcady,
 Have we not known, we too,
 The primal greenwood's arch of blue,
 The radiant clouds at sun-rise curled
 Around the brows of the golden world;
 The marble temples, washed with dew,
 To which with rosy limbs aflame
 The violet-eyed Thalassian came,

Came, pitiless, only to display
 How soon the youthful splendour dies away ;
 Came, only to depart
 Laughing across the gray-grown bitter sea ;
 For each man's life is earth's epitome,
 And though the years bring more than aught they take,
 Yet might his heart and hers well break
 Remembering how one prayer must still be vain,
 How one fair hope is dead,
 One passion quenched, one glory fled
 With those first loves that never come again.

How many years, how many generations,
 Have heard that sigh in the dawn,
 When the dark earth yearns to the unforgotten nations
 And the old loves withdrawn,
 Old loves, old lovers, wonderful and unnumbered
 As waves on the wine-dark sea,
 'Neath the tall white towers of Troy and the temples that
 slumbered
 In Thessaly ?

From the beautiful palaces, from the miraculous portals,
 The swift white feet are flown !
 They were taintless of dust, the proud, the peerless
 Immortals
 As they sped to their loftier throne !
 Perchance they are there, earth dreams, on the shores of
 Hesper,
 Her rosy-bosomed Hours,
 Listening the wild fresh forest's enchanted whisper,
 Crowned with its new strange flowers ;
 Listening the great new ocean's triumphant thunder
 On the stainless unknown shore,
 While that perilous queen of the world's delight and
 wonder
 Comes white from the foam once more.

When the mists divide with the dawn o'er those glittering
waters,

Do they gaze over unoared seas—

Naiad and nymph and the woodland's rose-crowned
daughters

And the Oceanides?

Do they sing together, perchance, in that diamond
splendour,

That world of dawn and dew,

With eyelids twitching to tears and with eyes grown tender
The sweet old songs they knew,

The songs of Greece? Ah, with harp-strings mute do
they falter

As the earth like a small star pales?

When the heroes launch their ship by the smoking altar
Does a memory lure their sails?

Far, far away, do their hearts resume the story
That never on earth was told,

When all those urgent oars on the waste of glory
Cast up its gold?

Are not the forest fringes wet

With tears? Is not the voice of all regret

Breaking out of the dark earth's heart?

She too, she too, has loved and lost; and though

She turned last night in disdain

Away from the sunset-embers,

From her soul she can never depart;

She can never depart from her pain.

Vainly she strives to forget;

Beautiful in her woe,

She awakes in the dawn and remembers.

THE SWIMMER'S RACE.

I.

BETWEEN the clover and the trembling sea
 They stand upon the golden-shadowed shore
 In naked boyish beauty, a strenuous three,
 Hearing the breakers' deep Olympic roar ;
 Three young athletes poised on a forward limb,
 Mirrored like marble in the smooth wet sand,
 Three statues moulded by Praxiteles :
 The blue horizon rim
 Recedes, recedes upon a lovelier land,
 And England melts into the skies of Greece.

II.

The dome of heaven is like one drop of dew,
 Quivering and clear and cloudless but for one
 Crisp bouldered Alpine range that blinds the blue
 With snowy gorges glittering to the sun :
 Forward the runners lean, with outstretched hand
 Waiting the word—ah, how the light relieves
 The silken rippling muscles as they start
 Spurning the yellow sand,
 Then skimming lightlier till the goal receives
 The winner, head thrown back and lips apart.

III.

Now at the sea-marge on the sand they lie
 At rest for a moment, panting as they breathe,
 And gazing upward at the unbounded sky
 While the sand nestles round them from beneath ;
 And in their hands they gather up the gold
 And through their fingers let it lazily stream
 Over them, dusking all their limbs' fair white,
 Blotting their shape and mould,
 Till, mixed into the distant gazer's dream
 Of earth and heaven, they seem to sink from sight.

IV.

But one, in seeming petulance, oppressed
 With heat has cast his brown young body free :
 With arms behind his head and heaving breast
 He lies and gazes at the cool bright sea ;
 So young Leander might when in the noon
 He panted for the starry eyes of eve
 And whispered o'er the waste of wandering waves,
 "Hero, bid night come soon !"
 Nor knew the nymphs were waiting to receive
 And kiss his pale limbs in their cold sea-caves.

V.

Now to their feet they leap and, with a shout,
 Plunge through the glittering breakers without fear,
 Breast the green-arching billows, and still out,
 As if each dreamed the arms of Hero near ;
 Now like three sunbeams on an emerald crest,
 Now like three toam-flakes melting out of sight,
 They are blent with all the glory of all the sea ;
 One with the golden West ;
 Merged in a myriad waves of mystic light
 As life is lost in immortality.

THE VENUS OF MILO.

I.

BACKWARD she leans, as when the rose unblown
 Slides white from its warm sheath some morn in May !
 Under the sloping waist, aslant, her zone
 Clings as it slips in tender disarray ;
 One knee, out-thrust a little, keeps it so
 Lingering ere it fall ; her lovely face
 Gazes as o'er her own Eternity !
 Those armless radiant shoulders, long ago
 Perchance held arms out wide with yearning grace
 For Adon by the blue Sicilian sea.

II.

No ; thou eternal fount of these poor gleams,
 Bright axle-star of the wheeling temporal skies,
 Daughter of blood and foam and deathless dreams,
 Mother of flying Love that never dies,
 To thee, the topmost and consummate flower,
 The last harmonic height, our dull desires
 And our tired souls in dreary discord climb ;
 The flesh forgets its pale and wandering fires ;
 We gaze through heaven as from an ivory tower
 Shining upon the last dark shores of Time.

III.

White culmination of the dreams of earth,
Thy splendour beacons to a loftier goal,
Where, slipping earthward from the great new birth,
The shadowy senses leave the essential soul !
Oh, naked loveliness, not yet revealed,
A moment hence that falling robe will show
No prophecy like this, this great new dawn,
The bare bright breasts, each like a soft white shield,
And the firm body like a slope of snow
Out of the slipping dream-stuff half withdrawn.

THE NET OF VULCAN.

FROM peaks that clove the heavens asunder
 The hunchback god with sooty claws
 Loomed o'er the night, a cloud of thunder,
 And hurled the net of mortal laws ;
 It flew, and all the world grew dimmer ;
 Its blackness blotted out the stars,
 Then fell across the rosy glimmer
 That told where Venus couched with Mars.

And, when the steeds that draw the morning
 Spurned from their Orient hooves the spray,
 All vainly soared the lavrock, warning
 Those tangled lovers of the day :
 Still with those twin white waves in blossom,
 Against the warrior's rock-broad breast,
 The netted light of the foam-born bosom
 Breathed like a sea at rest.

And light was all that followed after,
 Light the derision of the sky,
 Light the divine Olympian laughter
 Of kindlier gods in days gone by :
 Low to her lover whispered Venus,
 “ The shameless net be praised for this—
 When night herself no more could screen us
 It snared us one more hour of bliss.”

NIOBE.

How like the sky she bends above her child,
 One with the great horizon of her pain !
 No sob from our low seas where woe runs wild,
 No weeping cloud, no momentary rain,
 Can mar the heaven-high visage of her grief,
 That frozen anguish, proud, majestic, dumb !
 She stoops in pity above the labouring earth,
 Knowing how fond, how brief
 Is all its hope, past, present, and to come,
 She stoops in pity, and yearns to assuage its dearth

Through that fair face the whole dark universe
 Speaks, as a thorn-tree speaks thro' one white flower ;
 And all those wrenched Promethean souls that curse
 The gods but cannot die before their hour,
 Find utterance in her beauty. That fair head
 Bows over all earth's graves. It was her cry
 Men heard in Rama when the twisted ways
 With children's blood ran red !
 Her silence utters all the sea would sigh ;
 And, in her face, the whole earth's anguish prays.

It is the pity, the pity of human love
 That strains her face, upturned to meet the doom,
 And her deep bosom, like a snow-white dove
 Frozen upon its nest, ne'er to resume

Its happy breathing o'er the golden brace
Whose fostering was her death. Ay, death alone
Can break the anguished horror of that spell!

The sorrow on her face
Is sealed : the living flesh is turned to stone ;
She knows all, all, that Life and Time can tell.

Ah, yet, her woman's love, so vast, so tender ;
Her woman's body, hurt by every dart ;
Braving the thunder, still, still hide the slender
Soft frightened child beneath her mighty heart !
She is all one mute immortal cry, one brief
Infinite pang of such victorious pain
That she transcends the heavens and bows them
down !
The majesty of grief
Is hers, and her dominion must remain
Eternal. God nor man usurps that crown.

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE.

I.

CLOUD upon cloud, the purple pinewoods clung to the rich
 Arcadian mountains,
 Holy-sweet as a column of incense, where Eurydice
 roamed and sung :
 All the hues of the gates of heaven flashed from the white
 enchanted fountains
 Where in the flowery glades of the forests the rivers
 that sing to Arcadia sprung.

White as a shining marble Dryad, supple and sweet as a
 rose in blossom,
 Fair and fleet as a fawn that shakes the dew from the
 fern at break of day,
 Wreathed with the clouds of her dusky hair that kissed
 and clung to her sun-bright bosom,
 Down to the valley she came, and the sound of her feet
 was the bursting of flowers in May.

Down to the valley she came, for far and far below in the
 dreaming meadows
 Pleaded ever the Voice of voices, calling his love by her
 golden name ;
 So she arose from her home in the hills, and down through
 the blossoms that danced with their shadows,
 Out of the blue of the dreaming distance, down to the
 heart of her lover she came.

* * * * *

Red were the lips that hovered above her lips in the flowery haze of the June-day :

Red as a rose through the perfumed mist of passion that reeled before her eyes ;

Strong the smooth young sunburnt arms that folded her heart to his heart in the noon-day,

Strong and supple with throbbing sunshine under the blinding southern skies.

Ah, the kisses, the little murmurs, mad with pain for their phantom fleetness,

Mad with pain for the passing of love that lives, they dreamed—as we dream—for an hour !

Ah, the sudden tempest of passion, mad with pain for its over-sweetness,

As petal by petal and pang by pang their love broke out into perfect flower.

Ah, the wonder as once he wakened, out of a dream of remembered blisses,

Couched in the meadows of dreaming blossom to feel, like the touch of a flower on his eyes,

Cool and fresh with the fragrant dews of dawn the touch of her light swift kisses,

Shed from the shadowy rose of her face between his face and the warm blue skies.

II.

Lost in his new desire
He dreamed away the hours ;
His lyre
Lay buried in the flowers :

To whom the King of Heaven,
Apollo, lord of light,
Had given
Beauty and love and might :

Might, if he would, to slay
All evil dreams and pierce
 The gray
Veil of the Universe;

With Love that holds in one
Sacred and ancient bond
 The sun
And all the vast beyond,

And Beauty to enthrall
The soul of man to heaven :
 Yea, all
These gifts to him were given.

*Yet in his dream's desire
He drowsed away the hours :
 His lyre
Lay buried in the flowers.*

Then in his wrath arose
Apollo, lord of light,
 That shows
The wrong deed from the right ;

And by what radiant laws
O'eruling human needs,
 The cause
To consequence proceeds ;

How balanced is the sway
He gives each mortal doom :
 How day
Demands the atoning gloom :

How all good things await
 The soul that pays the price
 To Fate
 By equal sacrifice ;

 And how on him that sleeps
 For less than labour's sake
 There creeps,
 Uncharmed, the Pythian snake.

III.

Lulled by the wash of the feathery grasses, a sea with many
 a sun-swept billow,
 Heart to heart in the heart of the summer, lover by
 lover asleep they lay,
 Hearing only the whirring cicala that chirruped awhile
 at their poppied pillow
 Faint and sweet as the murmur of men that laboured
 in villages far away.

Was not the menace indeed more silent? Ah, what care
 for labour and sorrow?
 Gods in the meadows of moly and amaranth surely
 might envy their deep sweet bed
 Here where the butterflies troubled the lilies of peace, and
 took no thought for the morrow,
 And golden-girdled bees made feast as over the lotus
 the soft sun spread.

Nearer, nearer the menace glided, out of the gorgeous
 gloom around them,
 Out of the poppy-haunted shadows deep in the heart
 of the purple brake;
 Till through the hush and the heat as they lay, and their
 own sweet listless dreams enwound them,—
 Mailed and mottled with hues of the grape-bloom
 suddenly, quietly, glided the snake.

Subtle as jealousy, supple as falsehood, diamond-headed
and cruel as pleasure,
Coil by coil he lengthened and glided, straight to the
fragrant curve of her throat :
There in the print of the last of the kisses that still glowed
red from the sweet long pressure,
Fierce as famine and swift as lightning over the glittering
lyre he smote.

IV.

And over the cold white body of love and delight
Orpheus arose in the terrible storm of his grief,
With quivering up-clutched hands, deadly and white,
And his whole soul wavered and shook like a wind-swept leaf :

As a leaf that beats on a mountain, his spirit in vain
Assaulted his doom and beat on the Gates of Death :
Then prone with his arms o'er the lyre he sobbed out his
pain,
And the tense chords faintly gave voice to the pulse
of his breath.

And he heard it and rose, once again, with the lyre in
his hand,
And smote out the cry that his white-lipped sorrow denied :
And the grief's mad ecstasy swept o'er the summer-sweet
land,
And gathered the tears of all Time in the rush of its tide.

There was never a love forsaken or faith forsown,
There was never a cry for the living or moan for the slain,
But was voiced in that great consummation of song ; ay,
and borne
To storm on the Gates of the land whence none cometh
again.

Transcending the barriers of earth, comprehending them all
He followed the soul of his loss with the night in his
eyes ;
And the portals lay bare to him there ; and he heard the
faint call
Of his love o'er the rabble that wails by the river of
sighs.

Yea, there in the mountains before him, he knew it of old,
That portal enormous of gloom, he had seen it in dreams,
When the secrets of Time and of Fate through his har-
monies rolled ;
And behind it he heard the dead moan by their desolate
streams.

And he passed through the Gates with the light and the
cloud of his song,
Dry-shod over Lethe he passed to the chasms of hell ;
And the hosts of the dead made mock at him, crying, *How
long*
*Have we dwelt in the darkness, oh fool, and shall evermore
dwell ?*

*Did our lovers not love us ? the grey skulls hissed in his
face ;*
*Were our lips not red ? Were these cavernous eyes not
bright ?*
*Yet us, whom the soft flesh clothed with such roseate grace,
Our lovers would loathe if we ever returned to their
sight !*

Oh then, through the soul of the Singer, a pity so vast
Mixed with his anguish that, smiting anew on his lyre,
He caught up the sorrows of hell in his utterance at last,
Comprehending the need of them all in his own great
desire.

v.

And they that were dead, in his radiant music, heard the
moaning of doves in the olden
Golden-girdled purple pinewood, heard the moan of the
roaming sea ;
Heard the chant of the soft-winged songsters, nesting now
in the fragrant golden
Olden haunted blossoming bowers of lovers that
wandered in Arcady ;

Saw the soft blue veils of shadow floating over the billowy
grasses
Under the crisp white curling clouds that sailed and
trailed through the melting blue ;
Heard once more the quarrel of lovers above them pass,
as a lark-song passes,
Light and bright, till it vanished away in an eye-bright
heaven of silvery dew.

White as a dream of Aphrodite, supple and sweet as a
rose in blossom,
Fair and fleet as a fawn that shakes the dew from the
fern at break of day ;
Wreathed with the clouds of her dusky hair, that kissed
and clung to her sun-bright bosom,
On through the deserts of hell she came, and the brown
hair bloomed with the light of May.

On through the deserts of hell she came ; for over the
fierce and frozen meadows
Pleaded ever the Voice of voices, calling his love by
her golden name ;
So she arose from her grave in the darkness, and up
through the wailing fires and shadows,
On by chasm and cliff and cavern, out of the horrors
of death she came.

Then had she followed him, then had he won her, striking
a chord that should echo for ever,
Had he been steadfast only a little, nor paused in the
great transcendent song ;
But ere they had won to the glory of day, he came to the
brink of the flaming river
And ceased, to look on his love a moment, a little
moment, and overlong.

VI.

O'er Phlegethon he stood :
Below him roared and flamed
The flood
For utmost anguish named.

And lo, across the night,
The shining form he knew
With light
Swift footsteps upward drew.

Up through the desolate lands
She stole, a ghostly star,
With hands
Outstretched to him afar.

With arms outstretched, she came
In yearning majesty,
The same
Royal Eurydice.

Up through the ghastly dead
She came, with shining eyes
And red
Sweet lips of child-surprise.

Up through the wizened crowds
She stole, as steals the moon
Through clouds
Of flowery mist in June.

He gazed : he ceased to smite
The golden-chorded lyre :
Delight
Consumed his heart with fire.

Though in that deadly land
His task was but half-done,
His hand
Drooped, and the fight half-won.

He saw the breasts that glowed,
The fragrant clouds of hair :
They flowed
Around him like a snare.

*O'er Phlegethon he stood,
For utmost anguish named :
The flood
Below him roared and flamed.*

Out of his hand the lyre
Suddenly slipped and fell,
The fire
Acclaimed it into hell.

The night grew dark again :
There came a bitter cry
Of pain,
Oh Love, once more I die !

And lo, the earth-dawn broke,
And like a wraith she fled :
 He woke
Alone : his love was dead.

He woke on earth : the day
Shone coldly : at his side
 There lay
The body of his bride.

VII.

Only now when the purple vintage bubbles and winks in
the autumn glory,
Only now when the great white oxen drag the weight
of the harvest home,
Sunburnt labourers, under the star of the sunset, sing as
an old-world story
How two pale and thwarted lovers ever through Arcady
still must roam.

Faint as the silvery mists of morning over the peaks that
the noonday parches,
On through the haunts of the gloaming musk-rose, down
to the rivers that glisten below,
Ever they wander from meadow to pinewood, under the
whispering woodbine arches,
Faint as the mists of the dews of the dusk when violets
dream and the moon-winds blow.

Though the golden lute of Orpheus gathered the splendours
of earth and heaven,
All the golden greenwood notes and all the chimes of
the changing sea,
Old men over the fires of winter murmur again that he
was not given
The steadfast heart divine to rule that infinite freedom
of harmony.

Therefore he failed, say they; but we, that have no wisdom, can only remember
How through the purple perfumed pinewoods white
Eurydice roamed and sung:
How through the whispering gold of the wheat, where the poppy burned like a crimson ember,
Down to the valley in beauty she came, and under her feet the flowers upsprung.

*Down to the valley she came, for far and far below in the dreaming meadows
Pleaded ever the Voice of voices, calling his love by her golden name;
So she arose from her home in the hills, and down through the blossoms that danced with their shadows,
Out of the blue of the dreaming distance, down to the heart of her lover she came.*

FROM THE SHORE.

LOVE, so strangely lost and found,
 Love, beyond the seas of death,
 Love, immortally re-crowned,
 Love, who swayest this mortal breath,
 Sweetlier to thy lover's ear
 Steals the tale that ne'er was told ;
 Bright-eyes, ah, thine arms are near,
 Nearer now than e'er of old.

When on earth thy hands were mine,
 Mine to hold for evermore,
 Oft we watched the sunset shine
 Lonely from this wave-beat shore ;
 Pent in prison-cells of clay,
 Time had power on thee and me :
 Thou and heaven are one to-day,
 One with earth and sky and sea ;

Indivisible and one !
 Beauty hath unlocked the Gate,
 Oped the portals of the sun,
 Burst the bars of Time and Fate !
 Violets in the dawn of Spring
 Hold the secret of thine eyes :
 Lilies bare their breasts and fling
 Scents of thee from Paradise.

Brooklets have thy talk by rote ;
 Thy farewells array the West ;
 Fur that clasped thee round the throat
 Leaps—a squirrel—to its nest !
 Backward from a sparkling eye
 Half-forgotten jests return
 Where the rabbit lollops by
 Hurry-scurry through the fern !

Roses where I lonely pass
 Brush my brow and breathe thy kiss :
 Zephyrs, whispering through the grass,
 Lure me on from bliss to bliss :
 Here thy robe is rustling close,
 There thy fluttering lace is blown,—
 All the tide of beauty flows
 Tributary to thine own.

Birds that sleek their shining throats
 Capture every curve from thee :
 All their golden warbled notes,
 Fragments of thy melody,
 Crowding, clustering, one by one,
 Built it upward, spray by spray,
 Till the lavrock in the sun
 Pours thy rapture down the day.

Silver birch and purple pine,
 Crumpled fern and crimson rose,
 Flash to feel their beauty thine,
 Clasp and fold thee, warm and close :
 Every beat and gleam of wings
 Holds thee in its bosom furled ;
 All that chatters, laughs, and sings,
 Darts thy sparkle round the world.

*Love, so strangely lost and found,
Love, beyond the seas of death,
Love, immortally re-crowned,
Love, who swayest this mortal breath,
Sweetlier to thy lover's ear
Steals the tale that ne'er was told ;
Bright eyes, ah, thine arms are near,
Nearer now than e'er of old.*

THE RETURN.

O, HEDGES white with laughing may,
 O, meadows where we met,
 This heart of mine will break to-day
 Unless ye, too, forget.

Breathe not so sweet, breathe not so sweet,
 But swiftly let me pass
 Across the fields that felt her feet
 In the old time that was.

A year ago, but one brief year,
 O, happy flowering land,
 We wandered here and whispered there,
 And hand was warm in hand.

O, crisp white clouds beyond the hill,
 O, lavrock in the skies,
 Why do ye all remember still
 Her bright uplifted eyes.

Red heather on the windy moor,
 Wild thyme beside the way,
 White jasmine by the cottage door,
 Harden your hearts to-day.

Smile not so kind, smile not so kind,
 Thou happy haunted place,
 Or thou wilt strike these poor eyes blind
 With her remembered face.

REMEMBRANCE.

O, UNFORGOTTEN lips, grey haunting eyes,
Soft curving cheeks and heart-remembered brow,
It is all true, the old love never dies ;
And, parted, we must meet for ever now.

We did not think it true ! We did not think
Love meant this universal cry of pain,
This crown of thorn, this vinegar to drink,
This lonely crucifixion o'er again.

Yet through the darkness of the sleepless night
Your tortured face comes meekly answering mine ;
Dumb, but I know why those mute lips are white ;
Dark, but I know why those dark lashes shine.

O, love, love, love, what death can set us free
From this implacable ghost of memory ?

A PRAYER.

ONLY a little, O Father, only to rest
 Or ever the night comes and the eternal sleep,
 Only to rest for a little, a little to weep
 In the dead love's pitiful arms, on the dead love's breast,

A little to loosen the frozen fountains, to free
 Rivers of blood and tears that should slacken the pulse
 Of this pitiless heart, and appease these pangs that
 convulse
 Body and soul; oh, out of Eternity,

A moment to whisper, only a monient to tell
 My dead, my dead, what words are so helpless to say—
 The dreams unuttered, the prayers no passion could
 pray,
 And then—the eternal sleep or the pains of hell,

I could welcome them, Father, gladly as ever a child
 Laying his head on the pillow might turn to his rest
 And remember in dreams, as the hand of the mother
 is prest
 On his hair, how the Pitiful blessed him of old and smiled.

LOVE'S GHOST.

I.

THY house is dark and still : I stand once more
 Beside the marble door.
 It opens as of old : thy pale, pale face
 Peers thro' the narrow space :
 Thy hands are mine, thy hands are mine to hold,
 Just as of old.

II.

“ Hush ! hush ! or God will hear us ! Ah, speak low
 As Love spake long ago.”
 “ Sweet, sweet, are these thine arms, thy breast, thy hair
 Assuaging my despair,
 Assuaging the long thirst, quenching the tears
 Of all these years ?

III.

“ Thy house is deep and still : God cannot hear ;
 Sweet, have no fear !
 Are not thy cold lips crushed against my kiss ?
 Love gives us this,
 Not God ; ” but “ ah,” she moans, “ God hears us ; speak,
 Speak low, hide cheek on cheek.”

IV.

Oh then what eager whisperings, hoarded long,
Sweeter than any song,
What treasured news to tell, what hopes, what fears,
Gleaned from the barren years,
What raptures wrung from out the heart of pain,
What wild farewells again !

V.

Whose pity is this ? Ah, quick, one kiss ! Once more
Closes the marble door !
I grope here in the darkness all alone
Across the cold white stone,
Over thy tomb, a sudden starlight gleanis :
Death gave me this—in dreams.

ON A RAILWAY PLATFORM.

A DRIZZLE of drifting rain
 And a blurred white lamp o'erhead,
 That shines as my love will shine again
 In the world of the dead.

Round me the wet black night,
 And, afar in the limitless gloom,
 Crimson and green, two blossoms of light,
 Two stars of doom.

But the night of death is afire
 With a torch of back-blown fire,
 And the coal-black deeps of the quivering air
 Rend for my soul's desire.

Leap, heart, for the pulse and the roar
 And the lights of the streaming train
 That leaps with the heart of thy love once more
 Out of the mist and the rain.

Out of the desolate years
 The thundering pageant flows ;
 But I see no more than a window of tears
 Which her face has turned to a rose.

OXFORD REVISITED.

CHANGED and estranged, like a ghost, I pass the familiar
 portals,
 Echoing now like a tomb, they accept me no more as
 of old ;
 Yet I go wistfully onward, a shade thro' a kingdom of
 mortals
 Wanting a face to greet me, a hand to grasp and to
 hold.

Hardly I know as I go if the beautiful City is only
 Mocking me under the moon, with its streams and its
 willows agleam,
 Whether the City or friends or I that am friendless and
 lonely,
 Whether the boys that go by or the time-worn towers be
 the dream ;

Whether the walls that I know, or the unknown fugitive
 faces,
 Faces like those that I loved, faces that haunt and
 waylay,
 Faces so like and unlike, in the dim unforgettable places,
 Startling the heart into sickness that aches with the
 sweet of the May,—

Whether all these or the world with its wars be the wandering shadows !

Ah, sweet over green-gloomed waters the may hangs,
crimson and white ;
And quiet canoes creep down by the warm gold dusk of
the meadows,
Lapping with little splashes and ripples of silvery light.

Others like me have returned : I shall see the old faces
to-morrow,

Down by the gay-coloured barges, alert for the throb of
the oars,

Wanting to row once again, or tenderly jesting with sorrow
Up the old stairways and noting the strange new names
on the doors.

Is it a dream ? And I know not nor care if there be an awaking

Ever at all any more, for the years that have torn us apart,
Few, so few as they are, will ever be rending and breaking :
Sooner by far than I knew have they wrought this
change for my heart !

Well ; I grow used to it now ! Could the dream but remain and for ever,

With the flowers round the gray quadrangle laughing as time grows old !

For the waters go down to the sea, but the sky still gleams on the river !

We plucked them—but there shall be lilies, ivory lilies and gold.

And still, in the beautiful City, the river of life is no duller,
Only a little strange as the eighth hour dreamily chimes,
In the City of friends and echoes, ribbons and music and colour,

Lilac and blossoming chestnut, willows and whispering limes.

Over the Radcliffe Dome the moon as the ghost of a flower
Weary and white awakes in the phantom fields of the
sky:

The trustful shepherded clouds are asleep over steeple
and tower,
Dark under Magdalen walls the Cher like a dream
goes by.

Back, we come wandering back, poor ghosts, to the home
that one misses
Out in the shelterless world, the world that was heaven
to us then,
Back from the coil and the vastness, the stars and the
boundless abysses,
Like monks from a pilgrimage stealing in bliss to their
cloisters again.

City of dreams that we lost, accept now the gift we
inherit—
Love, such a love as we knew not of old in the blaze of
our noon,
We that have found thee at last, half City, half heavenly
Spirit,
While over a mist of spires the sunset mellows the moon.

THE THREE SHIPS.

(To an old Tune.)

I.

As I went up the mountain-side,
 The sea below me glittered wide,
 And, Eastward, far away, I spied
 On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
 The three great ships that take the tide
 On Christmas Day in the morning

II.

Ye have heard the song, how these must ply
 From the harbours of home to the ports o' the sky !
 Do ye dream none knoweth the whither and why
 On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
 The three great ships go sailing by
 On Christmas Day in the morning ?

III.

Yet, as I live, I never knew
 That ever a song could ring so true,
 Till I saw them break thro' a haze of blue
 On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day ;
 And the marvellous ancient flags they flew
 On Christmas Day in the morning !

IV.

From the heights above the belfried town
 I saw that the sails were patched and brown,
 But the flags were a-flame with a great renown
 On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
 And on every mast was a golden crown
 On Christmas Day in the morning.

V.

Most marvellous ancient ships were these !
 Were their prows a-plunge to the Chersonese ?
 For the pomp of Rome or the glory of Greece,
 On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
 Were they out on a quest for the Golden Fleece
 On Christmas Day in the morning ?

VI.

And the sun and the wind they told me there
 How goodly a load the three ships bear,
 For the first is gold and the second is myrrh
 On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day ;
 And the third is frankincense most rare
 On Christmas Day in the morning.

VII.

They have mixed their shrouds with the golden sky,
 They have faded away where the last dreams die . . .
 Ah yet, will ye watch, when the mist lifts high
 On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day ?
 Will ye see three ships come sailing by
 On Christmas Day in the morning ?

SLUMBER-SONGS OF THE MADONNA.

PRELUDE.

DANTE saw the great white Rose
 Half unclose ;
 Dante saw the golden bees
 Gathering from its heart of gold
 Sweets untold,
 Love's most honeyed harmonies.

Dante saw the threefold bow
 Strangely glow,
 Saw the Rainbow Vision rise,
 And the Flame that wore the crown
 Bending down
 O'er the flowers of Paradise.

Something yet remained, it seems ;
 In his dreams
 Dante missed—as angels may
 In their white and burning bliss—
 Some small kiss
 Mortals meet with every day.

Italy in splendour faints
 'Neath her saints !
 O, her great Madonnas, too,
 Faces calm as any moon
 Glows in June,
 Hooded with the night's deep blue !

What remains ? I pass and hear
 Everywhere,
 Ay, or see in silent eyes
 Just the song she still would sing
 Thus—a-swing
 O'er the cradle where He lies.

I.

Sleep, little baby, I love thee ;
Sleep, little king, I am bending above thee !
How should I know what to sing
Here in my arms as I swing thee to sleep ?
Hushaby low,
Rockaby so,
Kings may have wonderful jewels to bring,
Mother has only a kiss for her king !
Why should my singing so make me to weep ?
Only I know that I love thee, I love thee,
Love thee, my little one, sleep.

II.

Is it a dream ? Ah yet, it seems
Not the same as other dreams !
I can but think that angels sang,
When thou wast born, in the starry sky,
And that their golden harps out-rang
While the silver clouds went by !

The morning sun shuts out the stars,
Which are much loftier than the sun ;
But, could we burst our prison-bars
And find the Light whence light begun,
The dreams that heralded thy birth
Were truer than the truths of earth ;
And, by that far immortal Gleam,
Soul of my soul, I still would dream !

A ring of light was round thy head,
The great-eyed oxen nigh thy bed
Their cold and innocent noses bowed !
Their sweet breath rose like an incense cloud
In the blurred and mystic lanthorn light.

About the middle of the night
The black door blazed like some great star
With a glory from afar,
Or like some mighty chrysolite
Wherein an angel stood with white
Blinding arrowy bladed wings
Before the throne of the King of kings :
And, through it, I could dimly see
A great steed tethered to a tree.

Then, with crimson gems aflame
Through the door the three kings came,
And the black Ethiop unrolled
The richly broidered cloth of gold,
And pourèd forth before thee there
Gold and frankincense and myrrh !

III.

See, what a wonderful smile ! Does it mean
That my little one knows of my love ?
Was it meant for an angel that passed unseen,
And smiled at us both from above ?
Does it mean that he knows of the birds and the flowers
That are waiting to sweeten his childhood's hours,
And the tales I shall tell and the games he will play,
And the songs we shall sing and the prayers we shall pray
In his boyhood's May,
He and I, one day ?

IV.

For in the warm blue summer weather
We shall laugh and love together :
I shall watch my baby growing,
I shall guide his feet,
When the orange trees are blowing
And the winds are heavy and sweet !

When the orange orchards whiten
I shall see his great eyes brighten
To watch the long-legged camels going
Up the twisted street,
When the orange trees are blowing
And the winds are sweet.

*What does it mean? Indeed, it seems
A dream! Yet not like other dreams!*

We shall walk in pleasant vales,
Listening to the shepherd's song
I shall tell him lovely tales
All day long:
He shall laugh while mother sings
Tales of fishermen and kings.
He shall see them come and go
O'er the wistful sea,
Where rosy oleanders blow
Round blue Lake Galilee,
Kings with fishers' ragged coats
And silver nets across their boats,
Dipping through the starry glow,
With crowns for him and me!
Ah, no;
Crowns for him, not me!

*Rockaby so! Indeed, it seems
A dream! yet not like other dreams!*

v.

Ah, see what a wonderful smile again!
Shall I hide it away in my heart,
To remember one day in a world of pain
When the years have torn us apart,
Little babe,
When the years have torn us apart?

Sleep, my little one, sleep,
 Child with the wonderful eyes,
 Wild miraculous eyes,
 Deep as the skies are deep !
 What star-bright glory of tears
 Waits in you now for the years
 That shall bid you waken and weep ?
 Ah, in that day, could I kiss you to sleep
 Then, little lips, little eyes,
 Little lips that are lovely and wise,
 Little lips that are dreadful and wise !

VI.

Clenched little hands like crumpled roses
 Dimpled and dear,
 Feet like flowers that the dawn uncloses,
 What do I fear ?
 Little hands, will you ever be clenched in anguish ?
 White little limbs, will you droop and languish ?
 Nay, what do I hear ?
 I hear a shouting, far away,
 You shall ride on a kingly palm-strewn way
 Some day !

But when you are crowned with a golden crown
 And throned on a golden throne,
 You'll forget the manger of Bethlehem town
 And your mother that sits alone
 Wondering whether the mighty king
 Remembers a song she used to sing,
 Long ago,
 “Rockaby so,
Kings may have wonderful jewels to bring,
Mother has only a kiss for her king !” . . .

Ah, see what a wonderful smile, once more !
He opens his great dark eyes !
Little child, little king, nay, hush, it is o'er
My fear of those deep twin skies,—
Little child,
You are all too dreadful and wise !

VII.

But now you are mine, all mine,
And your feet can lie in my hand so small,
And your tiny hands in my heart can twine,
And you cannot walk, so you never shall fall,
Or be pierced by the thorns beside the door,
Or the nails that lie upon Joseph's floor ;
Through sun and rain, through shadow and shine
You are mine, all mine !

THE COTTAGE OF THE KINDLY LIGHT.

THERE is a valley of fir-woods in the West
That slopes between great mountains to the sea.
Once, at the valley's mouth, a cottage stood :
Its ruins remain, like boulders of a rock,
High on the hill, whose base is white with foam.
To its forsaken garden sometimes come
Lovers, who lean upon its grass-grown gate
And listen to the sea-song far below ;
Or little children, with their baskets, trip
Merrily through the fir-woods and the fern,
And climb the crumbling thistle-empurpled wall
Around the tangled copse, and laugh to find
The hardy straggling raspberries all their own.

Round it the curlews wheel and cry all night ;
And, with no other comfort than the stars
Can faintly shed from their familiar heights
It has been patient, while the world below
Has hidden itself in darkness and in clouds
Of terror from the landward-rushing storm.
Like a small gleam of quartz in a great rock,
A tiny beacon in the whirling gloom,
It stood and gathered sorrow from the world.

There, many years ago, a woman dwelt,
A sailor's widow with her only son ;

And ever as she hugged him to her heart
In those glad days when he was but a child,
Her memories of one black eternal night
When she had watched and waited for the sail
That nevermore returned, filled her with one
Supreme, almost unbreathable, desire
That this her little one, her living bliss,
The last caress incarnate of her love,
Should never leave her side ; or, if he left,
Never set forth upon the sea : her flesh
Shuddered as the sea shuddered in the sun
Over the cold grave of her first last love
Even to dream of it ; yet she remained
Silent and passive on her sea-washed hill,
Facing the sunset, in that lonely home,
Where everything bore witness to the sea,—
The shells her love had brought from foreign lands,
The model ship he built ; yet she remained.
For her first kisses lingered in the scent
Of those rough wallflowers round the whitewashed walls,
And the first flush of love that touched her cheek
Lingered and lived and died and lived again
In the pink thrift that nodded by the gate.
As if these and her outlook o'er the sea
Were nought else but her soul's one atmosphere,
Wherein alone she lived and moved and breathed,
Having no other thought but *This is home,*
My part in God's eternity, she still
Remained. The lad grew ; yet her fear was dumb.

The lad grew, and the white foam kissed his feet
Sporting upon the verge : the green waves laughed
And smote their hard bright kisses on his lips
As he swam out to meet them : the whole sea,
Like some strange symbol of the spiritual deeps
That hourly lure the soul of man in quest
Of beauty, pleasure, knowledge, summoned him out,
Out from the old faiths, the old fostering arms of home,

Called him with strange new voices evermore,
Called him with ringing names of high renown,
With white-armed sirens in its blossoming waves,
And heavenly cities in its westering suns ;
Called him ; and old adventures filled his heart,
And he forgot, as all of us forget,
The imperishable and infinite desire
Of the vacant arms and bosom that still yearn
For the little vanished children, still, still ache
To keep their children little ! He grew wroth
At aught that savoured of such fostering care
As mothers long to lavish, aught that seemed
To rob him of his manhood, his free-will :
And she—she understood and she was dumb.

And so the lad grew up ; and he was tall,
Supple, and sunburnt, and a flower of men.
His eyes had caught the blue of sea-washed skies,
And deepened with strange manhood, till, at last,
One eve in May his mother wandered down
The hill to await his coming, wistfully
Wandered, touching with vague and dreaming hands
The uncrumpling fronds of fern and budding roses
As if she thought them but the ghosts of spring.
From far below the golden breezes brought
A mellow music from the village church,
Which o'er the fragrant fir-wood she could see
Pointing a sky-blue spire to heaven : she knew
That music, her most heart-remembered song—

*“Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if Thou be near!”*

And as the music made her one with all
That soft transfigured world of eventide,
One with the flame that sanctified the West,
One with the golden sabbath of the sea,
One with the sweet responses of the woods,

One with the kneeling mountains, there she saw
In a tangle of ferns and roses and wild light
Shot from the sunset through a glade of fir,
Her boy and some young rival in his arms,
A girl of seventeen summers, dusky-haired,
Gray-eyed, and breasted like a crescent moon,
Lifting her red lips in a dream of love
Up to the red lips of her only son.
Jealousy numbed the mother's lonely soul,
And, sickening at the heart, she stole away.

Yet she said nothing when her boy returned ;
And, after supper, she took down the Book,
Her own dead grandsire's massive wedding-gift,
The large-print Bible, like a corner-stone
Hewn from the solemn fabric of his life—
An heirloom for the guidance of his sons
And their sons' sons ; and every night her boy
Read it aloud to her—a last fond link
Frayed and nigh snapt already, for she knew
It irked him. And he read, *Abide with us,*
For the day is far spent ; and she looked at him
Shyly, furtively. With great tears she gazed
As on a stranger in her child's new face.

At last he told her all—told of his love,
And how he must grow wealthy now and make
A home for his young sweetheart, how he meant
To work upon a neighbour's fishing-boat
Till he could buy one for himself. He ceased ;
Far off the sea sighed and a curlew wailed ;
A soft breeze brought a puff of wallflower scent
Warm through the casement. He looked up and smiled
Into his mother's face, and saw the tears
Creep through the gnarled old hands that hid her eyes.
He saw the star-light glisten on her tears !
He could not understand · her lips were dumb

Oh, dumb and patient as our mother Earth
 Watching from age to age the silent, swift,
 Light-hearted progress of her careless sons
 By new-old ways to one unaltering doom,
 Through the long nights she waited as of old
 Till in the dawn—and coloured like the dawn—
 The tawny sails came home across the bar.
 And every night she placed a little lamp
 In the cottage window, that if e'er he gazed
 Homeward by night across the heaving sea
 He might be touched to memory. But she said
 Nothing. The lamp was like the liquid light
 In some dumb creature's eyes, that can but wait
 Until its master chance to see its love
 And deign to touch its brow.

Now in those days

There went a preacher through the country-side
 Filling men's hearts with fire; and out at sea
 The sailors sang great hymns to God; and one
 Stood up one night, among the gleaming nets
 Astream with silver herring in the moon,
 And pointed to the lamp that burned afar
 And said, "Such is that *Kindly Light* we sing!"
 And ever afterwards the widow's house
 Was called *The Cottage of the Kindly Light*.

One night there came a storm up from the wild
 Atlantic, and a cry of fierce despair
 Rang through the fishing-village; and brave men
 Launched the frail lifeboat through a shawl-clad crowd
 Of weeping women. But, high o'er the storm,
 High on the hill one lonely woman stood,
 Amongst the thunders and the driving clouds,
 Searching, at every world-wide lightning glare,
 The sudden miles of white stampeding sea;
 Searching for what she knew was lost, ay lost
 For ever now; but some strange inward pride
 Forbade her to go down and mix with those

Who could cry out their loss upon the quays.
 High on the hill she stood and watched alone,
 Confessing nothing, acknowledging nothing,
 Without one moan, without one outward prayer,
 Buffeted by the scornful universe,
 Over the crash of seas that shook the world
 She stood, one steadfast fragment of the night ;
 And the wind kissed her and the weeping rain.

* * * * *

But braver men than those who fought the sea
 At dawn tramped up the hill, with aching hearts,
 To break her loss to her who knew it all
 Far better than the best of them. She stood
 Still at her gate and watched them as they came,
 Curiously noting in a strange dull dream
 The gleaming colours, the little rainbow pools
 The dawn made in their rough wet oilskin hats
 And wrinkled coats, like patches of the sea.

“Lost? My boy lost?” she smiled. “Nay, he will come!
 To-morrow, or the next day, or the next
 The Kindly Light will bring him home again.”
 And so, whate’er they answered, she would say—
 “The Kindly Light will bring him home again”;
 Until, at last, thinking her dazed with grief,
 They gently turned and went.

She had not wept.

And ere that week was over, came the girl
 Her boy had loved. With tears and a white face
 And garbed in black she came; and when she neared
 The gate, his mother, proud and white with scorn,
 Bade her return and put away that garb
 Of mourning: and the girl saw, shrinking back,
 The boy’s own mother wore no sign of grief,
 But all in white she stood; and like a flash

The girl thought, "God, she wears her wedding-dress !
Her grief has made her mad !"

And all that year

The widow lit the little Kindly Light
And placed it in the window. All that year
She watched and waited for her boy's return
At dawn from the high hill-top : all that year
She went in white, though through the village streets
Far, far below, the women went in black ;
For all had lost some man ; but all that year
She said to her friends and neighbours, "He will come ;
He is delayed ; some ship has picked him up
And borne him out to some far-distant land !
Why should I mourn the living ?" And, at dusk,
As if it were indeed the Kindly Light
Of faith and hope and love, she lit the lamp
And placed it in the window.

The year passed ;

And on an eve in May her boy's love climbed
The hill once more, and as the stars came out
And the dusk gathered round her tenderly,
And the last boats came stealing o'er the bar,
And the immeasurable sea lay bright and bare
And beautiful to all infinity
Beneath the last faint colours of the sun
And the increasing kisses of the moon,
A hymn came on a waft of evening wind
Along the valley from the village church
And thrilled her with a new significance
Unfelt before. It was the hymn they heard
On that sweet night among the rose-lit fern—
Sun of my soul ; and, as she climbed the hill,
She wondered, for she saw no Kindly Light
Glimmering from the window ; and she thought
"Perhaps the madness leaves her." There the hymn,
Like one great upward flight of angels, rose
All round her, mingling with the sea's own voice—

*"Come near and bless us when we wake,
Ere through the world our way we take,—
Till, in the ocean of Thy love,
We lose ourselves in heaven above."*

And when she passed the pink thrift by the gate,
And the rough wallflowers by the whitewashed wall,
And entered, she beheld the widow kneeling,
In black beside the unlit Kindly Light;
And near her dead cold hand upon the floor
A fallen taper, for with her last strength
She had striven to light it and, so failing, died.

IN THE COOL OF THE EVENING.

I.

IN the cool of the evening, when the low sweet whispers
waken,
When the labourers turn them homeward, and the
weary have their will,
When the censers of the roses o'er the forest-aisles are
shaken,
Is it but the wind that cometh o'er the far green hill ?

II.

For they say 'tis but the sunset winds that wander through
the heather,
Rustle all the meadow-grass and bend the dewy fern ;
They say 'tis but the winds that bow the reeds in prayer
together,
And fill the shaken pools with fire along the shadowy
burn.

III.

In the beauty of the twilight, in the Garden that He
loveth,
They have veiled His lovely vesture with the darkness
of a name !
Thro' His Garden, thro' His Garden it is but the wind
that moveth,
No more ; but O, the miracle, the miracle is the same !

IV.

In the cool of the evening, when the sky is an old
 story
Slowly dying, but remembered, ay, and loved with
 passion still,
Hush! . . . the fringes of His garment, in the fading
 golden glory,
Softly rustling as He cometh o'er the far green hill.

A ROUNDHEAD'S RALLYING SONG.

I.

How beautiful is the battle,
 How splendid are the spears,
 When our banner is the sky
 And our watchword *Liberty*,
 And our kingdom lifted high above the years.

II.

How purple shall our blood be,
 How glorious our scars,
 When we lie there in the night
 With our faces full of light
 And the death upon them smiling at the stars.

III.

How golden is our hauberk,
 And steel, and steel our sword,
 And our shield without a stain
 As we take the field again,
 We whose armour is the armour of the Lord !

VICISTI, GALILÆE.

“THE shrines are dust, the gods are dead,”
 They cried in ancient Rome !
 “ Ah yet, the Idalian rose is red,
 And bright the Paphian foam :
 For all your Galilæan tears
 We turn to her,” men say . . .
 But we, we hasten thro’ the years
 To our own yesterday.

Thro’ all the thousand years ye need
 To make the lost so fair,
 Before ye can award His meed
 Of perfect praise and prayer !
 Ye liberated souls, the crown
 Is yours ; but ah, some few
 Can hail, as this great Cross goes down
 Its distant triumph, too.

Poor scornful Lilliputian souls,
 And are ye still too proud
 To risk your little aureoles
 By kneeling with the crowd ?
 Do ye still dream ye “stand alone”
 So fearless and so strong ?
 To day we claim the rebels’ throne
 And leave you with the throng.

Ay ! He has conquered ! You at least
 The “van-guard” leaves behind
 To croon old tales of king and priest
 In the ingles of mankind :
 The breast of Aphrodite glows,
 Apollo’s face is fair ;
 But O, the world’s wide anguish knows
 No Apollonian prayer.

Not ours to scorn the first white gleam
 Of beauty on this earth,
 The clouds of dawn, the nectarous dream,
 The gods of simpler birth ;
 But, as ye praise them, your own cry
 Is fraught with deeper pain,
 And the Compassionate ye deny
 Returns, returns again.

O, worshippers of the beautiful,
 Is this the end then, this,—
 That ye can only see the skull
 Beneath the face of bliss ?
 No monk in the dark years ye scorn
 So barren a pathway trod
 As ye who, ceasing not to mourn,
 Deny the mourner’s God.

And, while ye scoff, on every side
 Great hints of Him go by,—
 Souls that are hourly crucified
 On some new Calvary !
 O, tortured faces, white and meek,
 Half seen amidst the crowd,
 Grey suffering lips that never speak,
 The Glory in the Cloud !

*In flower and dust, in chaff and grain,
He binds Himself and dies !
We live by His eternal pain,
His hourly sacrifice :
The limits of our mortal life
Are His. The whisper thrills
Under the sea's perpetual strife,
And through the sunburnt hills.*

Darkly, as in a glass, our sight
Still gropes thro' Time and Space :
We cannot see the Light of Light
With angels, face to face :
Only the tale His martyrs tell
Around the dark earth rings
He died and He went down to hell
And lives—the King of Kings !

Ay, while ye scoff, from shore to shore,
From sea to moaning sea,
*Eloi, Eloi, goes up once more
Lama sabachthani !*
The heavens are like a scroll unfurled.
The writing flames above—
This is the King of all the world
Upon His Cross of Love.

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